

S E N T I N E L R E P O R T

The Siege of Paris 1870-71





The Siege of Paris

This map is from my personal collection of sixty plus maps of the Franco Prussian war and is a composite from two of the original maps. I have put them together digitally so that one can see the entirety of the region.

This map is available from my blog: www.thesentinelhub.co.uk and is the first of many campaign and battle maps of the Franco Prussian war that I will have for sale from the site. Articles on various battles of the war will be posted regularly

These maps are incredibly detailed and are ideal for historians and wargamers and kriegspielers and anyone interested in the military history of this exciting era.

I have created this simple ebook to give readers an overview of the military events during the siege. It is an iterative design, meaning that will add further information as and when it needs to be updated with further information.



Garde Mobile de la Seine

Paris, with its population of 1,850,000, is the heart of business, manufacturing, and finance in France. It serves as the capital, boasting extensive transportation networks including eight railways, multiple highways, and various water routes connecting it to other major cities. The city spans about six or seven leagues in circumference, with its streets totaling a hundred miles.

The Seine River, ranging from 200 to 300 paces wide, divides Paris into two unequal parts, linked by 21 bridges. Its defenses consist of an inner rampart with 98 spacious bastions and revetted ditches. The city is further protected by 47 gates, 14 sally-ports, 10 railway openings, and 4 water entrances. A military road, the terreplein, runs within the bastions, while a circular railway aids in transportation and defense.

Beyond this inner line lies an outer defense perimeter, about 2,500 to 3,500 paces away, encircling Paris. This outer line comprises 15 detached forts strategically positioned to cover a wide area, especially towards the north and northeast. The forts are spaced roughly 3,500 paces apart, enhancing their defensive coverage.

To the north, forts such as St. Denis, De la Briche, Double Couronne du Nord, and De l'Est, along with natural defenses like the Rouillon stream, form a formidable barrier. Fort d'Aubervilliers lies to the south of the St. Denis canal, while Fort Romainville and its accompanying forts and redoubts protect the heights of Belleville and Pantin.

The defense continues along the Marne River, which is 100 paces wide. Additional fortifications, including Fort Charenton, safeguard the southeast angle, while the well-known Vincennes fortified castle serves as a stronghold. This fortified line, bolstered by redoubts and flanked by natural barriers, provides Paris with significant defensive capabilities.

The southern front of the outer line of defences commences on the left bank of the Seine, opposite Fort Charenton, with Fort Ivry, and thence is continued on a hilly, wooded plateau, intersected by ravines, by forts Bicêtre, Montrouge, Vanvres, and Issy, the last commanding the Seine; in front of the last three lie the heights of Bagneux, Clamart, Meudon, and Chatillon, which became of such importance during the siege. The forts command the railways to Sceaux and to Versailles.

The west front is bounded by the Seine and the Bois de Boulogne, and is defended by the fortress of Mont Valérien, which stands at a height of 415 feet above the river. This work is at distances of 1.5 miles (7 English miles) and 1 mile (4 2/3 English miles) respectively from the forts on either side, namely, St. Denis and Fort d'Issy. The course of the Seine from Fort Issy to the fortifications of St. Denis confers upon this portion of the city of Paris great defensive strength.

As the forts were built almost all at the same time, they have on the whole been treated almost alike as regards their defensive details; they have a bastioned trace, revetted ditches, similar arrangements of the communications within and without, and ramparts of almost the same very substantial profile. They are



Gallien de la Paix Publique (Art Critic)

all rendered quite proof against assault, and furnished with the requisite powder magazines. Bomb-proof cover for the garrisons is provided partly in casemates under the ramparts, in the curtains and flanks, and partly in keeps and barracks apart; where necessary, cavaliers are added to obtain a better view of the ground in front. There are no ravelins; for this reason the more important forts have hornworks in front of them, for the greater security of the front of attack.

The interior space and extent of the forts vary according to the importance of the work they are designed to perform, and the size of the garrisons allotted to them; the largest is the fortress of Mont Valérien, of Paris, with reference to their general arrangement and the fortress of Mont Valérien, which has a base of some 500 paces, and the least has a base of about 300.

Excitement and anxiety rippled through the streets of Paris as word spread of the French armies' retreat in the wake of intense battles at Spicheren, Weissembourg, and Worth. The urgency of the situation prompted swift action from authorities, who immediately ordered the mobilization of both the national guard and the garde mobile. The former, comprising citizens aged between 30 and 40, and the latter, consisting of those under 30, were called upon to bolster the city's defenses in the face of mounting tension.

As signs of potential unrest emerged among the populace, the issuance of bank notes surged to an unprecedented 2,400 million francs. Responding to the escalating situation, General Baraguay d'Hilliers declared a state of siege, invoking martial law to enable the implementation of stringent measures aimed at fortifying the city and its outskirts. This decisive action was deemed necessary, given the lack of adequate preparations during the prolonged period of peace.

The immediate focus of the defensive efforts was directed towards strengthening the city's fortifications. While an enceinte with a protective ditch existed, it became evident that additional measures were required to secure entrances and openings for railways and canals. This necessitated extensive reconstruction work, including the reinforcement of bridges and embankments spanning the city's ditches.

To enhance the city's resilience, gateways were minimized, drawbridges were meticulously restored to operational status, and the number of railway openings was significantly reduced and fortified with coverings. Strategic locations, such as key avenues, were identified for the preparation of barricades to impede potential incursions, while openings in underground canals were secured to prevent infiltration.

Moreover, a series of dams were strategically erected along the Seine to ensure the fortification ditches were adequately filled with water, providing an additional layer of defense. To safeguard these critical structures from enemy artillery fire, protective earthworks were meticulously constructed, reinforcing their resilience.



Garde Nationale

On the outskirts of the city, efforts were undertaken to clear surrounding spaces, demolish buildings, and level obstacles that could provide cover to potential adversaries. Additionally, slopes were adjusted to expose any threats to the line of fire from the ramparts, while entrances into the fortifications were fortified with sturdy earthworks to withstand enemy assaults, thereby enhancing their defensibility and ensuring the city's readiness for any potential conflict.

The communications from the fortress were made impassable for a long distance, by tearing up the causeways, by destroying bridges, and erecting barricades. A part of the iron-plated gunboats, armed each with one heavy gun, originally intended for the Rhine, was allotted to the defence of Paris and for operations on the Seine; they were commanded by naval officers, and manned by marines, and special districts and stations, well protected, were assigned to them. Thus some were in the upper Seine under the fire of forts Ivry and Charenton; others, between Meudon, Sevres, and the island of Bellevue, at St. Cloud and Suresnes; and others on the lower Seine, under the guns of the defences of St. Denis.

The movement of the gunboats was much interfered with, in spite of their small draught, by the shallowness of the water, and subsequently by the breaking up of the ice on the Seine. Apart from steamboats which were of some use in the defence, all the boats available for ferrying purposes were sunk in the Seine or the Marne.

The inundation of the east front of the defences of St. Denis was forthwith carried out, because it was always believed in Paris that an enemy would only have to choose between the front of St. Denis-Pantin and the front Romainville-Charenton. French military writers disputed only on this point, whether the one or the other was the key of Paris : no thought was bestowed on any other front of attack but these two.

Great importance was attached to strengthening the ground in front, so let us accordingly begin German description on the south. In front of the line of defence in that part, between Fort d'Issy and Fort Bicêtre, there runs a range of woody heights, over which are scattered villages, parks, and country houses. As the defences were designed in 1840, these heights were beyond the range of the guns of the period, and this was the reason that they were not considered. Since the introduction of long-range rifled ordnance, however, detached elevated spots, which look into the forts and hollows, have become dangerous. At the same time, therefore, that the place was put into a state of defence, as above-mentioned, the erection of detached works was undertaken, of which we name only the most important : –

1. A group of field-works on the ground in advance and to the west and south of Mont Valérien, namely, the Mühlen and Wolfsgruben redoubts, and the lunette of Suresnes.
2. A work at Montretout, immediately above the railway station of St. Cloud.
3. A work between forts Issy and Vanvres.



Garde Nationale Sédentaire

4. A redoubt by the side of the porcelain manufactory at Sevres, afterwards called the Kronprinzen-Schanze.

5. A work to the southward of Sevres, afterwards called the Jägerschanze.

6. A redoubt in the park of Meudon.

7. A work at Notre Dame de Clamart.

8. A work at Moulin de la Tour, afterwards called the Baiernschanze.

These last two entrenchments were situated upon spots commanding forts Issy, Vanvres, and Montrouge. The ramparts of these forts were raised about 2 metres to prevent the enemy seeing into them.

9. A smaller work at the hamlet L'Hay for the defence of the ground in front of Villejuif and the Fontainebleau road.

10. The works of Chatillon and Clamart, and of Villejuif, with a defensible communication to Fort Bicêtre.

11. A work 1,000 paces to the west of Villejuif, and southwest of Fort Bicêtre; this was originally open at the gorge and was afterwards converted into a redoubt. The technical execution and arrangement of this work was praised as being a model, and we give, therefore, some details of its construction. The entrenchment was traced as a five-sided redoubt, with a ditch and parapet of a strong profile, and with a bastioned gorge. The casemates for the accommodation of the soldiers were placed imder the ramparts, and constructed of wood, and their roofs were formed of railway iron. All the ramparts were arranged for artillery defence, and they had numerous hollow traverses, which served for cover for various purposes. The ditch was flanked partly by caponiers built of timber, partly by a loopholed wall, which ran along the foot of the counterscarp and likewise served as a palisading.

12. A terraced work in tiers at Cachan for eight guns to fire upon the valley of Bievre.

13. The defences of Vitry, with a communication attached leading to Villejuif, and communications to the rear to Fort Ivry, and as far as the Seine.

14. Works of defence at Bercy, where the Seine passes into the fortress, and at Point du Jour, where it passes out of the fortifications.

15. Works to strengthen the position in front of Fort Vincennes, and the advanced position on the Marne peninsula.



Naval Officer

16. Defences of Mont Avron, consisting of batteries, rows of musketry trenches, and arrangements for the defence of the network of buildings; the object was to take in flank the position of the blockading force on the east.

17. The defences of the position of La Courneuve, Le Bourget, and Drancy, where the roads had been made defensible : the places named had been fortified, and an independent earthwork had been constructed to serve as a keep to the whole.

18. A redoubt at Pierrefitte, northward from St. Denis, to fire upon the roads to Calais and Amiens and the railway to Creil.

19. A redoubt at Colombes, to command the peninsula of the Seine at that place.

20. An entrenchment between Billancourt and the Seine, for the defence of the passage of the river there in case it should be attempted.

21. Barricades in Billancourt, and the reconstruction of a covered trench to Fort Issy, in connection with which it was necessary to establish a means of communication over the Seine; a similar means of communication existed from Fort Charenton over the Marne to the Champ des Manoeuvres. A great number of batteries were also constructed and secured by special means, such as musketry trenches and defensible communications, of which here only the principal ones will be enumerated.

22. Batteries at St. Quen, westward of Courbevoie, for the defence of the Nanterre peninsula; these were intended, in conjunction with the work at Colombes, to fill up the great gap in the defences between the fortifications of Mont Valérien and St. Denis.

23. Batteries on the heights of Argenteuil.

24. Batteries on the flank of Villejuif, and at the mill of Saquet.

25. Batteries on the Marne peninsula, which in conjunction with forts Charenton and Nogent fired over the ground round Champigny and Champignolles.

26. Batteries at Drancy and Courneuve; these were to fire over the flat ground in front on both sides of the road to Lille.

The majority of the fortification works detailed above were undertaken either during or towards the conclusion of the defense, as circumstances allowed for the completion of the circle of French fortifications. These initiatives proved crucial, as they presented the most viable opportunities to significantly bolster the city's defensive capabilities.



Les Etrennes (Holiday Gifts)

Considerable surprise ensued due to the decision to forego the defense of Fort Vincennes from the outset. The justification for this unusual approach cited the inadequate structural integrity of the buildings for defensive purposes, as well as the imperative to maintain the fort for use as a prison facility.

The terrain surrounding Paris was found to be exceptionally conducive to fortification construction, prompting the implementation of defensive measures of various kinds. Musketry trenches, both simple and in multiple tiers, were strategically positioned, along with defensive communications linking key defense points. Walls and enclosures were repurposed into defensible positions, demonstrating the French's adeptness at adapting existing structures to bolster defenses.

The workforce engaged in these endeavors primarily consisted of civilians with relevant trades, rather than engineer-soldiers, owing to the scarcity of available arms, particularly at the onset of the siege. These civilians were not armed, underscoring the critical need to conserve weapons resources.

A diverse array of obstacles was deployed extensively to impede enemy advances, including abattis, trous-de-loup, wire fences, and land and water torpedoes. These obstacles were strategically positioned in front of trenches, batteries, and minor defenses to hinder enemy progress effectively.

Of particular note were ground torpedoes discovered within captured forts, which operated via friction-induced detonation triggered by the pressure of a foot driving in a hammer. It was evident that these devices were intended for use against assaulting columns and for defending breaches, underscoring the innovative approaches employed in the city's defense strategy.

General Trochu, headquartered at the President of the Council's hotel, demonstrated remarkable skill and vigor in orchestrating the construction of defenses and other defensive preparations. Assisted by his Chief of Staff, General Schmidt, and Deputy General Foy, Trochu's leadership was instrumental in navigating the multifaceted challenges of defense, including numerous internal arrangements demanding prudence and foresight.

Trochu's initiatives included the controversial expulsion of all Germans residing in Paris or France—an action not recognized by international law. He also oversaw the removal of non-essential civil authorities, such as railway directors, and orchestrated the relocation of valuable art treasures from the Louvre Museum to provincial towns. With the seat of government relocated to Tours, Trochu enforced strict measures to maintain order and security.

Under his leadership, individuals unable to prove their means of livelihood or those deemed to threaten public safety or property were compelled to leave Paris. Additionally, Trochu established a committee of defense, comprising himself as chairman, Marshal Vaillant, Admiral Rignault de Genouilly, Minister of Public Works Jérôme David, and Division Generals Chabaud la Tour, Guiod, D'Autemarre, D'Erville, and Soumaine.



Éclaireurs Franchetti

The plan of defense devised by Trochu, to be enacted in the event of a siege, primarily focused on ensuring the city's resilience and strategic positioning. Trochu's proactive approach and comprehensive strategies underscored his commitment to safeguarding Paris during this challenging period.

First Circle of Defence – Marshal Vinoy, with his corps and the survivors of MacMahon's army assembled at Laon, defended the position at Argenteuil; General Mellinet occupied the position at Sceaux-Bourg with some regiments of the line and newly formed troops; the provincial garde mobile, with some line regiments, were at Noissy-Villiers. A cavalry corps was placed at Bourget, eastward of St. Denis.

Second Circle of Defence – This included the defence of the forts which were occupied by gardes mobiles and by marine artillery.

Third Circle of Defence – This comprised the defence of the enceinte, which was strengthened in rear by preparing the streets and buildings lying near for defence. Much assistance was derived from the circular railway, which was very advantageous for military purposes. It should be observed that this railway rendered most remarkable service in the preparation of works and armaments, in the conveyance of great quantities of materials, such as timber and earth for increasing the thickness of parts of the ramparts, and the construction of numerous traverses and bombproofs, as well as in transporting troops at a subsequent period.

Fourth Circle of Defence – To this belonged the interior defence by means of barricades, dividing the streets into sections, and by the system of street-defence, projected and executed by the Emperor Napoleon for street-fighting. It cannot be denied that the fundamental idea of this system of defence was well considered, and it would perhaps have fulfilled the expectations entertained of it, if the course of events had been such as to require a step-by-step defence, and if they had well disciplined troops available in Paris.

It should be stated that the particulars of the strength and composition of the army of Paris varied, and no approximation to accuracy has been attained. The original garrison of Paris was in part reinforced by the addition of the 4th battalions of the field regiments. After the battle of Sedan there came from the north, from the neighbourhood of Méziers, Vinoy's corps, strengthened by the survivors of MacMahon's army and the garrison of the camp at Chalons, as well as probably about 100,000 men of the army of Lyons. Moreover, 20,000 labourers were formed into battalions. In the middle of September, some time before the investment, the strength of the army amounted to: Regulars 80,000 men. Parisian Garde Mobile and Garde Nationale 100,000 men. Free Corps 10,000 men. Garde Mobile from other places 60,000 men. A total of 250,000 men.

Additional levies from non-exempt age groups swelled the army's ranks to nearly double its original strength, reaching approximately 500,000 men. Notably, a Polish legion, though not officially designated as such, and an English-North-American legion volunteered their services to the defense committee.



Légion des amis de la France

Moreover, the Polytechnic school contributed skirmishers and artillery personnel for duty in designated bastions of the city's enceinte.

The Parisian garde mobile and garde nationale were organized into four divisions, with headquarters established in prominent locations like the Palais Royal, the Conservatoire, the Elysée, and the Luxembourg Palace. However, the army's formation was haphazard, lacking sufficient military training, discipline, and experienced leadership, rendering it ill-prepared for significant military operations despite its numerical superiority over the besieging German forces.

General Trochu initially proposed recalling Marshal Bazaine's army to reinforce the capital's defense, but this plan could not materialize due to Bazaine's entrapment in Metz. Trochu also voiced objections to the diversion of MacMahon's army to the north, albeit without success.

As the siege progressed, the garrison's situation improved as they gained cohesion and tactical proficiency in addition to their numerical strength. Extensive drilling and training were undertaken, with a focus on familiarizing troops with defensive duties, necessitating the daily deployment of 70,000 men.

By mid-October, the command structure of the defending forces was as follows: General Trochu served as Commanding-in-Chief, supported by General Schmitz as Chief of the General Staff, General Goyo overseeing the artillery, General Chalaud la Tour in charge of the engineers, and Intendant General Wolf managing logistical affairs. These leadership appointments reflected efforts to streamline and enhance the effectiveness of the defense strategy during this critical phase of the siege.

First Army – General Clement Thomas, Commanding; Chief of the Staff, Colonel Montagut; 266 battalions of sedentary National Guard.

Second Army – General Ducrot, Commanding; Chief of the Staff, General Oppert, 1st Corps.–Three divisions. General Blanchard; Chief of the Staff, Colonel Filippi. 2nd Corps.–Three divisions. General Renault; Chief of the Staff, General Forri Pisani. 3rd Corps.–Two divisions of infantry, a division of cavalry. General d'Exea; Chief of the Staff, Colonel de Belgarie.

Third Army– General Vinoy, commanding. Six infantry divisions, including the marines, and two cavalry brigades.

The defence of the enceinte was divided into nine sections, named after the suburbs in front of them; each was placed under the command of a General of Division, or Vice-Admiral, whose staff was complete in all arms and branches. The garrison of these sections consisted of national guards—generally 25 to 40 battalions to each, according to the number of bastions included in it. Strict instructions and regulations were issued for the guards at the gateways and sally-ports, and for the duty on the ramparts of the bastions.



Garde Nationale Sédentaire. Officier - Cantiniere

Neither the casemates within Paris nor the bombproof shelters in the bastions could accommodate the extensive garrison. As a result, a significant portion of troops were stationed in temporary encampments at Meaux, the Bois de Vincennes, the Bois de Boulogne, and other locations, while others found refuge in tents or nearby villages between the enceinte and the forts. These arrangements were subject to frequent alterations to adapt to changing circumstances.

Given the immense scale of the defensive preparations required, immense credit is due to the engineer authorities, led by General Chabaud la Tour. A highly skilled engineer, General la Tour oversaw the execution of the excellently defiladed east front of the city between 1842 and 1844. Despite the assistance of civilian engineers, some demolitions were carried out without military necessity, leading to unnecessary hindrances to enemy approach.

Several significant demolitions were undertaken in the vicinity of Paris, including the destruction of approximately 60 bridges and the blowing up of railway tunnels and viaducts. Trochu even ordered the burning of forests and woods surrounding Paris to deprive the besieging army of vital resources, although this was only partially successful due to the rapid deployment of French troops.

The artillery within the defensive works operated under the command of General Groyo. Efforts to arm Paris with artillery were pursued vigorously alongside fortification preparations. Specific details of the armaments, as reported by Cardinal von Widderen, are subject to change throughout the siege but generally included a mix of heavy and light naval guns, with many smooth-bore pieces deployed on the ramparts.

1. The 98 bastions of the enceinte, each with 400 metres (438 yards) development of front, were each to receive 8 to 10 twelvepounders. The gateways and sally-ports were defended by guns of a greater calibre. The carriages were of cast iron. Total 1,226 pieces.

2. The armament of the detached forts is given as follows: Charenton, 70; Vincennes, 117; Nogent, 53; Rosny, 56; Noisy le-Sec, 57; Romainville, 49; Aubervilliers, 66; Fort de l'Est de Saint Denis, 52; La Briche, 61; Mont Valérien, 79; Issy, 64; Vanvres, 45; Montrouge, 43; Bicêtre, 40; Ivry, 70.

It should be noted that the figures mentioned for the number of guns encompass not only those within the detached forts but also include those in auxiliary redoubts, outworks, and other defensible posts, along with a suitable reserve of artillery. Following the German occupation of the works, it became evident that these estimates were accurate, with the total number of guns in Paris estimated at approximately 2,000 pieces. To accommodate this vast arsenal, an artillery park was established in the Tuileries gardens.

These observations indicate that the artillery complement in Paris, as in other French fortresses, was generally substantial, albeit with some shortcomings in terms of equipment suitability and preparation compared to Prussia. Efforts were made to address these deficiencies with commendable vigor and strategic insight.



Garde Nationale Sédentaire

As early as mid-August, a workforce of 6,800 individuals, including women to some extent, was engaged in the production of cartridges and case-shot. Significant quantities of ammunition were also sourced from Toulon and Montpellier, where major cartridge factories were located. Meanwhile, Parisian foundries and ironworks were repurposed to produce shot and shell, effectively serving as makeshift arsenals. Throughout the siege, a remarkable 251,572 cannon projectiles and 1,000,000 bullets for mitrailleurs were manufactured within Paris.

Additionally, locomotives were constructed at the Cail engine works, fitted with iron-plated sentry boxes for crew protection, and iron-plated trucks were repurposed to transport guns. The fortifications were swiftly armed with various types of guns, particularly at strategic locations like Point du Jom, Auteuil, Vaugirard, and the detached forts.

To compensate for the shortage of experienced gunners, a significant number of marine artillery personnel were deployed to Paris, earning praise for their disciplined conduct and steadfastness under fire.

However, despite these efforts, the fire from the batteries on the works was characterized by an egregious waste of ammunition, lacking coherent planning and effective supervision. This indiscriminate use of costly projectiles, such as on solitary patrols or without clear strategic objectives, resulted in significant financial and material losses. Instances of wanton destruction, including the burning of St. Cloud and Malmaison palaces and the devastation of towns and villas, reflect a reckless disregard for valuable resources, perpetrated by the French themselves.

The garrison artillery appeared to disregard precision in their firing, neglecting to adjust elevation and direction, despite their advantage in accurately gauging distances. Despite possessing superior equipment, their effectiveness was compromised. Nevertheless, the garrison artillery exhibited remarkable determination and bravery in operating their guns, capitalizing on the exposed positions of their adversaries whenever possible.

Artillery fire from the forts was augmented by guns mounted in field redoubts positioned strategically in front of, between, and behind them, as well as in separate emplacements. Military roads connecting most forts facilitated communication, with trenches branching out to critical points, enabling unexpected strikes against enemy positions.

During the siege, attention was drawn to a new long-range gun stationed at the fortress of Mont Valérien, known as Sainte Valerie. This formidable weapon bombarded batteries on the south front with its massive projectiles, reaching distances of up to 9,000 paces westward. The gun, boasting a caliber of 36 centimeters and firing 80-pound projectiles, was rendered inoperative upon the fort's surrender and subsequently became a trophy of war in Berlin.

In terms of provisioning, Intendant-General Wolf oversaw operations. The defense committee effectively



la Garde Nationale de Marche

tackled the daunting task of supplying Paris with essential provisions, earning widespread approval. Convoys of provisions destined for the French army of the Rhine ceased by mid-August, prompting a shift to sourcing supplies from England. Twenty-eight ships laden with flour departed Liverpool for Havre. The committee initially planned to provision two million inhabitants for two months, relying on grain stocks from the Seine and Marne departments. These measures proved practical, enforced by decree mandating the destruction of stores in the path of the advancing Prussian forces.

Cattle and sheep brought in by the government were housed in various locations across Paris, but harsh weather and fodder shortages led to significant losses. The population faced escalating prices and shortages of essential items like butter, salt, vegetables, eggs, and milk, though flour and wine remained available. The hardship prompted some to resort to unconventional food sources like dogs, cats, and rats. Soldiers, though facing reduced rations, did not experience a total lack of provisions throughout the siege. Nonetheless, the combination of hunger and cold led to increased mortality rates, particularly among the elderly and children.

The scarcity of coal for fuel and gas production was keenly felt, and later in the siege, wood became increasingly scarce. Stringent measures were implemented to safeguard timber yards and timber within the defenses from looting and destruction.

Similar to the situation in Metz, the provisions in Paris lasted longer than initially anticipated. The true quantity of provisions in the city on September 19th remains uncertain, but it's believed that the existing stores were underestimated. The blockade hindered subsequent attempts to replenish supplies. The looming food shortage was a major factor prompting negotiations for surrender, particularly during the three-week truce when the situation reached its peak. While stocks of flour and horseflesh were limited, fresh supplies were delayed by fourteen days, exacerbating the crisis. At the time of surrender, the garrison's provisions were not fully depleted, allowing for some allocation to the civilian population.

Communication with the outside world was severed soon after the besieging army arrived at Paris, with the last post dispatched on September 18th. Attempts at underground telegraph communication and other methods were thwarted by the Prussians. Balloons emerged as a crucial means of transmitting news, with dedicated factories established for their production and operation. Over the course of the siege, fifty-four balloons were launched, carrying personnel and thousands of letters. Carrier-pigeons were also employed but proved unreliable, with many failing to return. The management of these communication methods fell under the purview of the adept post-master, Rampont de Chin.

Observation posts were strategically set up on Montmartre, the Pantheon, and the towers of Notre Dame, primarily focused on monitoring the flat terrain to the west and northeast. The forts were linked via underground telegraph lines to various headquarters, notably the Place Vendôme, facilitating communication between them. Additionally, visual signals, including nocturnal ones, were employed to enable fort commandants to communicate.



Tambours et Clairons de la Garde Nationale Sédentaire

The fortress of Mont Valérien served as a vantage point for pre-arranged flag signals, often serving as a warning for impending sorties, intensifying the besiegers' vigilance. Paris utilized electrical light apparatus to observe enemy activities at night, benefiting from ample supplies and skilled operators.

The German forces assigned to the siege comprised the IIIrd Army, led by the Crown Prince of Prussia, and the IVth Army, commanded by the Crown Prince of Saxony. The IIIrd Army, consisting of Prussian and Bavarian corps, along with the Württemberg division, totaled approximately 140,000 troops. Meanwhile, the IVth Army, including the Prussian Guard, IVth Corps, and XIIth (Saxon) Corps, numbered around 80,000 soldiers. The combined German force amounted to 220,000 men, awaiting reinforcements from Germany.

As early as September 16th, the German cavalry division's advance guard reached Creteil, Nouilly, Corbeille, and Clamart, tasked with disrupting telegraph lines, intercepting supplies, and safeguarding railways and bridges. Minor clashes occurred with French reconnaissance units dispatched from the forts.

On September 17th, the IIIrd Army's advance guards encountered destroyed bridges over the Seine at Corbeille and Villeneuve-St. George. Consequently, a pontoon bridge was swiftly constructed above Villeneuve-St. George by the 5th pioneer battalion, facilitating the crossing of the 2nd cavalry division. The 17th infantry brigade, stationed at Limeuil, engaged French forces at Valenton Woods, securing the pontoon bridge's establishment and enabling the passage of German forces.

On the 18th September the Vth army corps commenced their march on Palaiseau and Bievre. At Dame Rose there was a slight engagement between detachments of the 9th division and the French outposts, but this did not at all delay the further advance on Versailles.

On the 19th September a more serious encounter took place on the plateau of Petit Bicêtre, and Plessis-Piquet, which had been carefully prepared for defence. The Royal Bavarian army had also in great part crossed the Seine at Corbeille on pontoon-bridges, and was on the 18th brought forward as far as the neighbourhood of Longjumeau and Palaiseau; their IInd corps on the 19th followed the Prussian Vth corps on the road to Versailles, to which place the head-quarters of the Crown Prince of Prussia were to be transferred on the 20th September. On the French side General Ducrot, with the 13th corps, had advanced to the road from Fontainebleau and Orleans, in order to prevent the occupation of the plateaus Clamart-Chatillon and Plessis-Piquet, which were of the greatest military importance. As a point d'appui he occupied the intrenchment of Moulin de la Tour, previously mentioned, which was not yet finished. On the left the French had occupied Sceaux; their right rested on the park of Meudon.

By 6am. the advanced guard of the Vth Prussian corps (King's grenadiers, and 47th regiment) had attacked the enemy, who was six times stronger than themselves. At Petit-Bicêtre a brisk engagement began, and was maintained with equal obstinacy on both sides for several hours. It did not cease until a



Garde Mobile des Départements

brigade of the 1st Bavarian division, under Colonel Diehl, was sent forward in support. Later on the 10th division was directed on Villa Coublay, and the corps artillery was advanced.

About 11 o'clock the French beat a retreat on the entrenchments of Moulin de la Tour. While a Bavarian brigade was directed on Sceaux, the 8th brigade of the 4th Bavarian division was sent to Croix de Bernis, the 7th towards Bourg; with these movements the enemy was to be outflanked. In the meanwhile, about a 11.45am, the enemy again made a stand, and attacked Fontenay and Plessis vigorously. The fight thickened, and the artillery took a large share in it.

The French fired with six batteries from the entrenchment of Moulin de la Tour, and other strongly fortified positions in front of and beside it, the Germans from well-covered positions opposite. About 1.30pm the French ventured an attack on the Bavarian position, and then, failing of success, fell back about 2.30pm. The 3rd Bavarian division pursued them with the 3rd battalion of jägers, detachments of the 14th regiment, two batteries, and a regiment of light horse, occupied the abandoned entrenchment of Moulin de la Tour, and captured there seven 12-pounder field-pieces.

The French continued their retreat uninterrupted to Paris. The Vth corps had, in the forenoon, when the enemy fell back at Petit Bicêtre, resumed their advance on Versailles. They arrived there towards evening, took 2,000 of the garde mobile prisoners, and occupied at once the entrenchments thrown up by the French at Montretout and Sevres. The captured works at Sevres, and at Moulin de la Tour were henceforth named by the Germans the Kronprinz, the Jäger, and the Bavarian entrenchments. The VIth Prussian corps crossed the Seine at Villeneuve, the advanced guard by the bridge made by the Vth corps, the rest by one they had made themselves in the meantime, and went on to Orly. Its further advance was prevented by the fire from the lately-constructed but unfinished French entrenchment at Villejuif. Towards evening this redoubt was occupied by the Prussians, but unfortunately was given up again, because it was no longer tenable in the face of the heavy fire from the retired positions of the French. The army corps placed their outposts on the line Chevilly to Choisy.

On the evening of the 19th September the outposts of the IIIrd army stood on the line Bougival, Sèvres, Meudon, Bourg, L'Hay, Chevilly, Thiais, Choisy-le-Roi, Bonneville, Creteil, Champigny, Brie; in corresponding positions in rear, were the Vth corps, the 1st and IInd Bavarian corps, the VIth and XIIth corps, and the Wurtemberg division.

At Les Tanneries, and in the neighbourhood of Bougival and Tournay, communication was established over the Seine and Marne respectively, by means of pontoon-bridges, with the IVth army. This army performed their march on Paris without meeting with any resistance; except that, between Pierrefitte and Montmagny, a slight engagement took place, which resulted in the capture, by detachments of the IVth corps, of the fortified positions occupied by the French. Le Bourget and Drancy remained in the occupation of the enemy, who did not fall back here till the 20th September. The outposts of the IVth army stood generally on the line Neuilly, Villemomble, Le Bourget, Dugny, Stains, Pierrefitte, Epinay,



Les Guetteurs (The Lookouts)

Argenteuil, Besons. The head-quarters of the IVth Army were in Grand Tremblay; those of the King in Ferrieres, the chateau of the Rothschilds, on the left bank of the Marne not far from Lagny; from this point he overlooked the positions of the two investing armies.

The disruption of the centralized government machinery in Paris severed communication between the army stationed in the city and the field armies, both those investing Paris and those being assembled.

The German army's leader astutely identified the southern front as the weakest point for a primary attack, a decision reinforced by defensive vulnerabilities.

Mont Valérien fortress, situated to protect Paris's western flank, aimed to secure the Nanterre peninsula and defend the areas toward St. Cloud and Sevres. However, the effectiveness of Mont Valérien's coverage toward St. Cloud and Sevres was compromised due to its distance and terrain. To address this weakness, construction began on the Montretout fort to bolster defenses in that direction. However, the fort fell into Prussian hands before completion. Consequently, Mont Valérien had to extend its protection toward St. Cloud, with Fort Issy taking over defense duties further. This arrangement left a dead space at Sevres and Bellevue, strategically advantageous for potential advances toward Fort Issy and Point du Jour. The proximity of the Seine further weakened Point du Jour, making it a likely target for advancement on Paris if necessary.

In hindsight, the decision to position the main attack on the southern front proved highly advantageous. The swift capture of French works prepared for the siege had significant implications for the attack's progress.

The next strategic move for the investing army was to firmly establish itself in the positions it occupied. This was crucial to sever all communications between Paris and the rest of the country and prevent the garrison from breaking through to establish contact with other French armies. The goal was to hold off the French at every point of the encirclement long enough for German reinforcements to arrive and push them back into the fortress.

Each army corps had a designated position in the encirclement circle, which it fortified with suitable fortifications. Captured redoubts were turned toward the enemy to provide strong points of support. Villages, with their sturdy construction, also served as points of defense, with barricades erected at their approaches, communication lines repaired, and defensive structures like loopholes and banquettes added to favorable walls. Alarm posts were set up, and huts were built to house troops on standby.

The primary objectives throughout the encirclement operations were to construct defensive works to secure troops and establish obstacles defended by musketry. These obstacles were intended to slow down enemy advances, allowing German troops to occupy the rear defensive line. Gaps were left in the obstacle line for potential offensive maneuvers. Obstacles included abatis, existing walls, and buildings



Aérostier

fortified for defense. Infantry primarily occupied the defensive line behind these obstacles, with artillery emplacements placed depending on the terrain.

While numerous such works were constructed throughout the encirclement circle, let's focus on the section between Meudon and Bougival, tasked to the Vth and VIth corps.

The line of obstacles in this section began at the northern boundary fence of Meudon, continued with rifle-pits to Bellevue, and extended along the steep slope to St. Cloud, ending at the Montretout redoubt. Abatis and rifle-pits crowned the heights of Garches, leading to the eastern boundary of Bougival and ending at the Seine. The line was flanked and reinforced by blockhouses, the Crown Prince, and Montretout redoubts.

The line of defensive works in rear started at the parks of Chalais, Meudon, and St. Cloud, extending over the plateau of Garches to the stud enclosure. The stud enclosure, acting as the center of the position, was fortified with abatis, batteries, and self-defensible earthworks. This defensive line continued toward Bougival, with additional emplacements arranged for batteries near the villages of Ville d'Avray, Marnes, and Vaucresson.

The VIth corps had to cover the ground between the Seine and Bievre, beginning at Villeneuve-St. George, the same place where subsequently were the two bridges allotted for the use of the siege-train. Next was the northern boundary of Choisy, particularly the churchyard, which was fortified in the most formidable manner, barricaded, and rendered completely secure against the assault of infantry. Opposite, lay the village of Vitry, also fortified by the French, and close at hand were some gunboats on the Seine. Further to the westward, and within German position came the villages of Thiais and Choisy, both fortified; opposite, but in the possession of the French, were Villejuif, which was also fortified, and a redoubt at the same place, both covered by Fort Bicêtre. At the junction of the high roads to Versailles and Fontainebleau and inside the German position lay the strongly entrenched farm of La Belle Epine, the central point of an artillery position containing 84 field guns, strengthened and covered by shelter trenches for six battalions; and next to it, pushed forward on the slope of the right bank of the Bievre, was the village of L'Hay with the wall skirting its edge arranged for a determined resistance, being the point of support for a brigade.

Opposite lay the enemy's redoubt of Haute Bruyeres (Cachan) covered by Fort Bicêtre. The outposts of the Prussian position at this point were also protected by a line of obstacles with shelter trenches and other arrangements for defence, whilst the section of ground to be held was rendered secure by formidable fortified posts and entrenched emplacements for the employment of masses of artillery.

In the low-lying area eastward of St. Denis, where French positions were protected by inundations, the Guard Corps similarly made the section from Séoran to Dugny impassable by damming up the Morce stream. This left only two narrow defiles available, at Port Iblon on the embanked high road of Lille and at Aulnay. Defenses were established around this inundation, with strongly fortified villages such as Dugny,



Franç Tireurs Arronssobn – Tirailleurs des Ternes

Le Blanc-Mesnil, and Aulnay acting as key points of defense, with Le Blanc-Mesnil serving as the center.

Shelter trenches and artillery positions were prepared on the undulating ground behind the inundation, providing significant defensive strength to this area. The French positions, as described previously, particularly from a consideration of their mutual positions, made the village of Le Bourget a constant target of attacks from both sides.

The intended inundation of the Morée by the Germans would have struggled due to a limited water supply if it hadn't received additional water from the damming of the Ourcq canal at Sevrans. This action not only contributed to the inundation but also reduced the water supply to the St. Denis area and withdrew drinking water from Parisian inhabitants. Captain von Krause of the Engineers was entrusted with the execution of this operation. When the inundation froze during winter, it had to be broken up in several places.

Establishing communications through road construction for supply and transport columns was a labor-intensive task. Guideposts were set up to assist troops, and barricades were erected along with bridges and roads to facilitate communication between corps. Numerous bridges were constructed, including those at Le Pecq, Bougival, Les Tanneries, Triel, Villeneuve St. Georges, and Gournay over the Marne, as well as multiple bridges at Corbeille, not to mention many footbridges over smaller water bodies and hollow roads. In some locations, these structures were fortified against surprise attacks with entrenchments.

As winter set in, preserving these structures became challenging, especially with the risk of damage from floating ice masses on the Seine. Some bridges had to be removed, and permanent bridges located farther behind the investing army were utilized instead.

In terms of tactical considerations for the besieging army, adapting the defense to the terrain's peculiarities was paramount. Each division allocated about one-fifth to one-sixth of its strength to outpost duty. These outposts, along with pickets (sometimes supported by artillery), fortified designated points where they were instructed to stand their ground and engage the enemy. Due to the limited field of view towards the enemy caused by woods and undulating ground, observation posts were essential. These included locations such as the Marly aqueduct, often used by the commanding officers due to its commanding view, as well as other points like the redoubt of Moulin de la Tour, Malmaison, Bougival, the Lantern of Diogenes, the Villa du Barry, Sevres, Le Blanc-Mesnil, among others. Semaphore stations were also set up for signaling day and night.

Intelligence bureaus were established at principal commands, along with a service for transmitting important orders via mounted orderlies organized in relays stationed at pickets and crossroads. Additionally, divisional staffs were linked to corps and headquarters staff via field telegraph.



Cavalerie de la Garde Nationale

Similar to other French fortresses, bearers of flags of truce were fired upon, contrary to customary practices of war. Instances of this included Lieutenant v. Kissing on October 1st and 1st Lieutenant v. Uslar on December 23rd.

The destruction of the tunnel at Nanteuil, while not significantly increasing the IIIrd army's difficulties in advancing, posed a serious obstacle in forming siege parks. Its restoration faced setbacks, with temporary wooden supports collapsing under pressure, necessitating the construction of a branch line to bypass the obstacle. The availability of a second rail line after the fall of Soissons eased supply concerns on the east side, while communication to the west and northwest was only established after the fall of La Fère.

At the siege's outset, the lack of railway communication with provision magazines in the rear posed significant supply challenges. This required intense effort and foresight from the commissariat officials to manage adequately. In addition to regular supplies from Germany, requisitions were necessary in districts beyond the immediate vicinity, already depleted by the French. Requisitions often required convoys due to hostile populations and frequent clashes with francs-tireurs. Once railways via Amiens, Laon, Rouen, and Orleans became operational in December and January, provisioning became more manageable. For instance, a single army corps required about five trains of 32 wagons each per day, while the daily provision and forage supply for the armies before Paris included items such as 148,000 three-pound loaves, 1,020 cwt. of rice or grain, 595 bullocks or 1,020 cwt. of bacon, 144 cwt. of salt, 9,600 cwt. of oats, 2,400 cwt. of hay, and 28,000 quarts of brandy.

The principle sorties

The objective of smaller sorties was to harass Prussian outposts and make targeted demonstrations, rather than causing significant interruptions in the investment or siege works. It wasn't until the final days of the siege, around mid-January, that small sorties targeted the batteries on the south front of the attack.

On the other hand, large-scale sorties played a crucial role in attempting to breach the investing line and link up with French armies in the north, south, and west. These sorties were coordinated with field army commanders, possibly communicated through the balloon post. Preparations for these sorties were lengthy, likely due to political considerations aimed at appeasing the Parisian populace.

The movement of troops towards the intended sortie locations, often facilitated by the circular railway, was observed by German outposts and observatories. For example, the occupation of St. Cloud on **September 21** was a consequence of troop movements out of Paris on **September 19**.

On **September 23**, small reconnaissances were directed from St. Denis towards Pierrefitte, from Aubervilliers towards Le Bourget, and from Fort Bicêtre against Villejuif.



Corps Francs des Chemin de Fer

September 24 saw engagements between outposts at Sevres and St. Cloud and gunboats stationed at Suresnes.

A more significant sortie occurred on September 30, which the enemy had announced through troop movements outside the fortress. General Vinoy attacked the 12th division with six battalions between Choisy le Roi and La Belle Epine, supported by Forts Montrouge and Bicêtre. Demonstrations were also made on the left and right wings. Despite the brave defense of L'Hay by the 23rd regiment, it eventually had to be evacuated. However, the attacks on the wings were only demonstrations, and the German VIth corps, supported by Bavarian detachments, drove the enemy out of L'Hay behind their entrenchments. General Guilhelm fell during this engagement. The French estimated their losses at 1,200 men, while the Germans suffered 80 killed and 300 wounded, capturing 300 unwounded French prisoners. It remains unclear whether the French intended to breach the German lines or merely disrupt the passages of the Seine or retaliate for their previous setbacks.

On the **3rd of October** the headquarters of the King were removed from the Chateau of Ferrières to Versailles.

After frequent alarms on both sides, and much useless cannonading from the forts, the next sortie took place on the **7th of October**; on this occasion also there were great movements of troops on the preceding day to the entrenchments in rear of d'Ivry and Bicêtre. Probably this was only a demonstration. But, in the afternoon, a French force of all arms marched out of Fort Mont Valérien towards Rueil, returning towards the evening, having covered the destruction of part of German line of defence at Malmaison.

On the **13th October** the palace of St. Cloud was set on fire by the guns of Mont Valérien, without any apparent reason; the 5th jäger battalion, and the 58th regiment attempted to save as much as possible from the flames. The same day 10 French battalions of Blanchard's division, with cavalry and field guns, advanced in three columns against the position of the IIInd Bavarian corps, and drove their outposts out of Chatillon and Bagneux; the enemy had his reserves in readiness behind Fort Montrouge, in case the capture of the heights of Chatillon and the Bavarian redoubt should succeed. After a combat of six hours duration, in which first the 8th, and then the 7th Bavarian brigade took part, the enemy was driven back with considerable loss. In this sortie, which in the French reports is described as an "offensive reconnaissance," the guns from the French redoubt, constructed on the height between L'Hay and Villejuif, gave a good support, and annoyed the Bavarian right flank considerably; their loss was 10 officers and 860 men.

October 14th. A sortie of several French battalions was repulsed by the piquets and some guns of the XIIth corps.

At this period the 22nd division under General von Wittich, and the 1st Bavarian corps under General von



Garde Mobile Officier

der Tann were withdrawn from the investing force, in order to operate against the French army which had been formed in the south. On the other hand the guard landwehr divisions had arrived before Paris, and numerous changes were made in the positions of the troops.

In the night of the **19th-20th of October** a lively fire was kept up by the forts, and repeated night attacks by strong infantry detachments were made against German outposts at Chevilly, that is to say, in the direction of Orleans, but without any result whatever.

October 21st. The sortie launched on this day against the Vth corps began with a heavy fire from Fort Mont Valérien, followed later by gunfire from gunboats stationed on the Seine, primarily targeting St. Cloud and Sevres. Under the command of General Ducrot, the following troops were deployed: General Berthaut with 3,400 men, 20 guns, and one squadron between the railroad to St. Germain and Rueil; General Noel with 1,350 men and 10 guns to operate against Bougival and the park of Malmaison; and Colonel Colleton with 1,000 men and 18 guns to maintain communication between the two previous columns and join in the attack on Bougival. Additionally, there were two reserve main columns: one under General Martenot with 2,000 men and 18 guns, and the other under General Paturel, consisting of 2,000 men, 28 guns, and two squadrons. Altogether, approximately 10,000 men, 94 guns, and three squadrons were under the supreme command of General Ducrot, positioned with support from the fortress of Mont Valérien.

The attack was aimed at the 10th division along the line of Bougival, Malmaison, and Garches. The 19th brigade formed the outposts, with the 46th regiment on the left wing and the 6th regiment on the right, while the 20th brigade remained in reserve. Around 3 o'clock in the afternoon, four of the enemy's battalions launched an attack on the park of Malmaison. After a fierce fight, they were repelled by the 46th Regiment, two battalions of the 6th regiment, and detachments of the 1st guard landwehr regiment. Meanwhile, another enemy attack against La Celle was pushed back by portions of the 50th regiment. The 5th and 6th companies of the 50th regiment, with assistance from some men of the 6th regiment, captured two guns and safely withdrew despite heavy enemy fire.

On the right wing, the advanced troops of the 9th division were engaged. The batteries of the IVth corps at Chatou and Besons, on the right bank of the Seine, cooperated effectively toward the end of the fight, which ended around 5 o'clock with a general retreat of the French toward Neuilly and Fort Mont Valérien, under cover of the latter's guns. The troops involved in the sortie retreated slowly to the fortress, keeping Prussian detachments under arms until late in the evening. In Versailles, defensive positions were taken. Our losses in the combat amounted to 15 officers and 297 men killed and wounded, while the French suffered 28 officers and 232 men casualties, excluding 800 prisoners.

A small sortie took place at the same time against the Würtemberg division: three battalions, supported by the Faisandrie redoubt, crossed the Marne at Joinville and advanced against Champigny, but were repulsed by the 2nd jäger battalion and part of the 7th regiment with a loss of 3 killed and 30 wounded.



Les Billets des Logement

The fight on the **30th October** at La Bourget, which was occupied by only one company of the Guard, was of more importance; the village had been attacked on the 28th by superior French forces from Fort d'Aubervilliers, and the garrison driven out. The place lay under a cross-fire from the forts at St. Denis, d'Aubervilliers, and Romainville, and the French made every effort to secure this advantageous position and fortify it. An attempt was made on the 29th to drive the enemy out of Le Bourget by the fire from the batteries in rear, but it failed.

The re-capture of this post of such importance to the Prussians was, therefore, ordered for the **30th October**; the 2nd division of foot guards, under the command of Lieut.-General v. Budritzky, was told off for this service. It was arranged that a right column consisting of two battalions of the Franz regiment, a centre column composed of the 3rd grenadiers of the guard, and one battalion of the Queen's (Konigin) regiment, and a left column of two battalions of the Alexander regiment, with three companies of the battalion of sharpshooters of the guard, the whole supported by artillery and engineers as well as the necessary reserves, should attack Le Bourget simultaneously, and, if possible, cut off the retreat of the enemy on St. Denis. Preparations had also been made for the attack to be supported on both flanks by other troops of the investing force.

Le Bourget was occupied by 6,000 men, besides a reserve of several battalions on the Paris road.

The combat was opened at 8 o'clock in the morning by a fire from retired artillery positions in the lines Garges-Aulnay; the left column was immediately set in motion, crossed the Moleret stream without much resistance, and reached the road south of Le Bourget, drove the enemy out of his entrenched position, and forced the reserve into a hurried retreat. In the meantime the other columns had advanced to storm Le Bourget, where a most obstinate hand-to-hand fight took place in the streets and houses. The heroic General von Budritzky led his troops in person, flag in hand, against the barricades at the northern entrance to Le Bourget, followed by Colonels Count Kanitz and Von Zaluskowsky, the latter of whom was killed in the street of the village.

On the other side the Augusta regiment had pushed into the village; its colonel, Count Waldersee, who had only just rejoined after recovery from a severe wound at Gravelotte, fell here, with another officer, by French treachery, having been shot from a house, the defenders of which had lured him on by the waving of handkerchiefs.

As a result, the Prussians fiercely continued the fight, and by half-past 12 o'clock, they had taken control of Le Bourget. The Prussian casualties amounted to 85 officers and 449 men killed and wounded, while the French suffered losses of 30 officers and 1,250 unwounded prisoners.

According to information from the captured prisoners and the large quantity of provisions seized at Le Bourget, it appeared that the enemy had intended to include the town in their fortified outposts and construct extensive works around it. However, the outcome differed from their intentions, as the



Ambulances Internationales

2nd pioneer company of the guard, under the command of Captain von Spanckeren of the engineers, immediately began preparations to fortify the area.

The failure of the French sorties caused significant dissatisfaction in Paris, leading to an uprising on the night of October 30th-31st, which was swiftly suppressed by the government's troops. Negotiations for an armistice took place in the first days of November, lasting for five days without reaching a resolution. The IInd Prussian corps, arriving before Paris in the latter half of November, was attached to the IIIrd army and stationed in cantonments behind the VIth Prussian and IInd Bavarian corps, stretching from Longjumeau to the Seine. Concurrently, the XIIth (Saxon) corps shifted its left wing across the Marne, while the Württemberg Division closed in on the VIth corps.

Following the Le Bourget sortie, the VIth corps was transferred to the IVth army with orders to combat the francs-tireurs bands appearing in the rear of the position, particularly at Meaux and Lagny along the communication line. A flying column dispatched to Nangis successfully captured 5 officers, 597 men, and two guns with minimal losses.

Although conflicts between outposts decreased after the Le Bourget battle and the excessive ammunition expenditure from the forts decreased overall, indications of a significant sortie emerged by November, likely directed toward the south or southeast. General Trochu aimed to link up with the hastily organized army under Gambetta, advancing towards relief via Beaune under General de Paladines.

On **November 29th**, a sortie targeted the VIth corps position at L'Hay, Chevilly, Thiais, and Choisy-le-Roi. Preceded by heavy cannon fire during the night of November 28th-29th from some southern forts, apparently to wear out German troops, the enemy launched attacking columns from Arcueil and Vitry against L'Hay. The VIth corps was positioned strongly to repel the assault, despite the enemy's strength of about 3,000 men.

After a hard fight of three hours, without any result, the French were thrown back, leaving 2 officers and 200 men in the hands of the Germans; the latter, sheltered behind their strongly entrenched position, never permitted the French to develop their forces, and caused them great losses both in killed and wounded; on German side the loss was 200, of whom 3 officers and 32 men were killed.

On the **30th of November**, the battle was renewed with increased forces, under the personal command of General Trochu; an attempt was made to penetrate the lines of the Württemberg division, on the ground in front of the peninsula of St. Maur. The enemy commanded the ground where the Marne bends to the south, the villages of La Varenne, Pont Mesnil, and the district behind St. Maur, including the wood of les Fosses, by means of Forts Charenton and Nogent, and the works thrown up in advance. Near Cretéil is Mont Mesly, which is high enough to be regarded as the commanding point of the surrounding country.



Artillerie de la Garde Nationale

The enemy concentrated their forces near Fort Charenton, in the St. Maur camp (Forest of Vincennes), and between Forts Rosny and Nogent.

The initial offensive movement was launched from Fort Charenton towards the Mesly hill. Simultaneously, another thrust originated from Joinville towards Champigny, while a third advance came from Nogent, targeting Brie and Villiers. The three Württemberg companies stationed at Mesly were overwhelmed by the early morning assault, forcing them to retreat to their supports as the enemy seized control of the Mesly heights and deployed two batteries. An artillery duel ensued, with the Württemberg division regrouping and launching a counterattack against the heights with the 2nd and 3rd brigades. After fierce fighting, they successfully recaptured the heights around mid-day. The 7th brigade of the IInd corps, positioned with a battery at Villeneuve St. Georges, supported the attack from the side of Valenton, catching the enemy in flank and forcing their reserves to retreat from the wood of Créteil to the village of the same name and Fort Charenton.

The bravery of the Württembergers is evident from their losses of 40 officers and 700 men, compared to nearly 2,000 killed and wounded reported by General Trochu for the French.

At Champigny and Brie, the Württembergers were relieved just before daybreak by the Saxons. Although six companies of Saxons occupied these positions, they were compelled to yield to the advancing French columns, who swiftly captured the village of Villiers to the north. However, the French did not press further against the German main position. Subsequently, the German reserves, including the 48th infantry brigade (Saxons) and the 1st Württemberg brigade, courageously drove the enemy out of Villiers, although Champigny and Brie remained in French hands. In the afternoon, fierce fighting erupted between Neuilly and Coeuilly, with infantry battling for control of the villages and artillery positioned in the intervals. In this sector alone, 42 guns of the XIth corps were engaged. The relentless combat, marked by determined efforts on both sides, persisted until darkness brought an end to the day's fighting.

On this bloody day, the Saxons suffered losses of 29 officers and 879 men, while the Württembergers lost 1,500 troops but captured 940 prisoners. The intensity of the fighting suggested that the French exerted every effort to breach the German lines. They meticulously planned preparations, including constructing five bridges over the Marne and ensuring a steady supply of fresh troops. Offensive actions were directed against various points of the besieging army, accompanied by a continuous cannonade from all the forts. Iron-plated railway wagons and gunboats were also employed, particularly at Chevilly, where the VIth corps held entrenchments. Despite the enemy's fortified position, the VIth corps managed to repel the attack and send reinforcements to support the Württembergers.

Simultaneously, sorties were launched from St. Denis against the positions of the IVth and Guard Corps, and from St. Cloud against the Vth Corps, albeit without success. Engagements occurred all around the city. Despite General Trochu's boasting of victories at Champigny and Brie, the French forces found it necessary to maintain their positions quietly the next day.



Garde Nationale Auxiliaire

On **December 1st**, troops did not engage in combat, but the French requested an armistice until 4 o'clock in the afternoon to bury their dead.

In anticipation of a possible renewal of the attack, the entire IInd Corps was deployed to the right bank of the Seine, taking up a position between Coeuilly and Chennevières as a reserve behind the Württembergers. This strategic move proved invaluable. Under the command of General von Fransecky, a composite force consisting of portions of the XIIth Corps, the IInd Corps, a brigade of the VIth Corps, and the Württemberg Division was assembled. At dawn on December 2nd, the 1st Württemberg Brigade, along with the Saxons, launched a renewed assault on Champigny. Despite briefly capturing the village, the Germans couldn't hold it due to its defenses and the arrival of fresh enemy troops brought by the nearby railroad. The Prussian 7th Brigade attempted an attack from Chennevières but could only secure the upper part of the village due to effective enemy fire. Throughout the day, intense fighting raged around Champigny and the Champigny-Villiers line, with multiple brigades and artillery units engaged in the battle.

After 10 hours hard fighting, the firing ceased here about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. The 24th (Saxon) division had been. Ordered to re-capture Brie; about 8 o'clock in the morning, the place was attacked and the enemy driven into the lower part of the village, where he made a stand covered by good artillery positions. The fight in and round Brie came to a standstill. As the enemy in his well-entrenched position, was constantly receiving reinforcements, it was impossible to get possession of the whole of the village, notwithstanding the devoted bravery of the 1st and 2nd battalions of the sharpshooters, of the 107th regiment, and a battalion of the 104th regiment.

Although the Germans had a numerous artillery at their disposal, the ground was so unfavourable that it could not come fully into action. Round Villiers, and especially in the park, which was bravely defended, first, by the Württembergers, and afterwards by the Saxons, the fighting continued with great courage on both sides. At nightfall the enemy retired. The losses of the Saxons on this day amounted to 55 officers and 1,096 men, those of the Württembergers were 48 officers and 700 men. The troops went into cantonments in the villages on the battlefield, in order to occupy on the morning of the 3rd December the positions previously held by them. The French repeated on this day some offensive movements against Champigny, but without any energy; they maintained themselves however at Brie. The IInd corps lost, on the **30th November, and the 2nd and 3rd December**, 89 officers and 1,517 men.

On this day, the concentrated German position behind Champigny and Brie prompted the French to retreat from the remaining areas under their control. They withdrew from all points across the Marne, dismantling the boat bridges after crossing the river. Recognizing the need to reinforce this position with additional fortifications, strong detachments of pioneers were dispatched to the area from the south front.

Despite the French's significant efforts to break out, mobilizing 70,000 of their best troops on **November 30th and December 2nd**, their endeavors proved futile. They failed, as on previous occasions, due to a



les Frères des Écoles Chrètiennes

lack of decisive follow-up after gaining initial advantages through vigorous attacks. General Ducrot, who commanded on December 2nd and 3rd and had five horses shot under him on the first day, acknowledged the bravery of the German troops in his general orders. The French occupation and fortification of Mont Avron on **November 28th** were deemed highly disadvantageous to the German forces.

Nearly three weeks passed without any sorties from Paris. In the meantime, the French attempted to unite the army of Paris with that of General Faidherbe, commander of the northern army, while also threatening the German north-easterly line of communication. They aimed to disrupt the ongoing works for the bombardment of Mont Avron. This led to a mass sortie on **December 21st**, with three divisions under General Ducrot's command launching simultaneous attacks against the north-easterly portion of the investing line along two roads, covered by various forts.

On the afternoon of **December 20th**, the movement of large enemy troop contingents out of St. Denis was observed, prompting the guard corps to make necessary dispositions. By the morning of December 21st, it was unclear where the enemy intended to attack. Suddenly, Le Bourget came under unexpected assault from the northern side, resulting in the capture of the churchyard and 125 men. However, with reinforcements, the Germans successfully repelled the French from the village after a fierce fight, capturing three officers and 356 men.

Simultaneously, Stains faced an attack but managed to repulse the enemy, with the forts and field artillery providing heavy support throughout the day. By evening, the firing ceased, allowing the Prussian troops to reclaim their positions. The Prussians captured three officers and 356 unwounded prisoners, with their own loss amounting to 14 officers and 400 men, while the French sustained considerable casualties, with 40,000 men engaged in the battle.

On the **19th and 20th of December**, demonstrations were made from Mont Avron towards Maison Blanche and Ville-Evrart against the XIth corps. In the afternoon of the 20th, the enemy concentrated about two divisions and 11 batteries at Noisy-le-Sec, further strengthened during the night by railroad reinforcements. Fresh batteries were unmasked on Mont Avron. Around mid-day, the enemy attacked from Neuilly, resulting in the loss of Maison Blanche and Ville-Evrart, only held by German outposts. A further advance against the strong position of the 24th division at Chelles was prevented by Wiirtemberg Batteries and the overflowing Marne. The 24th division, reinforced, then advanced, capturing Maison Blanche and repulsing the enemy from Ville-Evrart. The Saxons lost 1 officer and 40 men, mostly slightly wounded.

On the **21st December**, the 4th infantry division was placed in reserve behind the XIth corps, with the 5th brigade and four batteries advanced to the Marne bridge at Voires, but no collision occurred with the enemy.

While these sorties occurred, the French made demonstrations from Fort Mont Valérien towards



Artillerie de Marine

Montretout and Buzenval, repelled by the German outposts. Additionally, useless shell fire was directed from the forts against unengaged German corps.

On **December 22nd**, two French brigades advanced along the Marne against the XIIth Corps' left wing but were forced to retreat by Württemberg batteries at Noisy.

On **January 15th**, more sorties against the guard and XIIth corps were repulsed by the Germans, potentially linked to General Faidherbe's operations in the north or to disrupt preparations for the attack on Mont Avron.

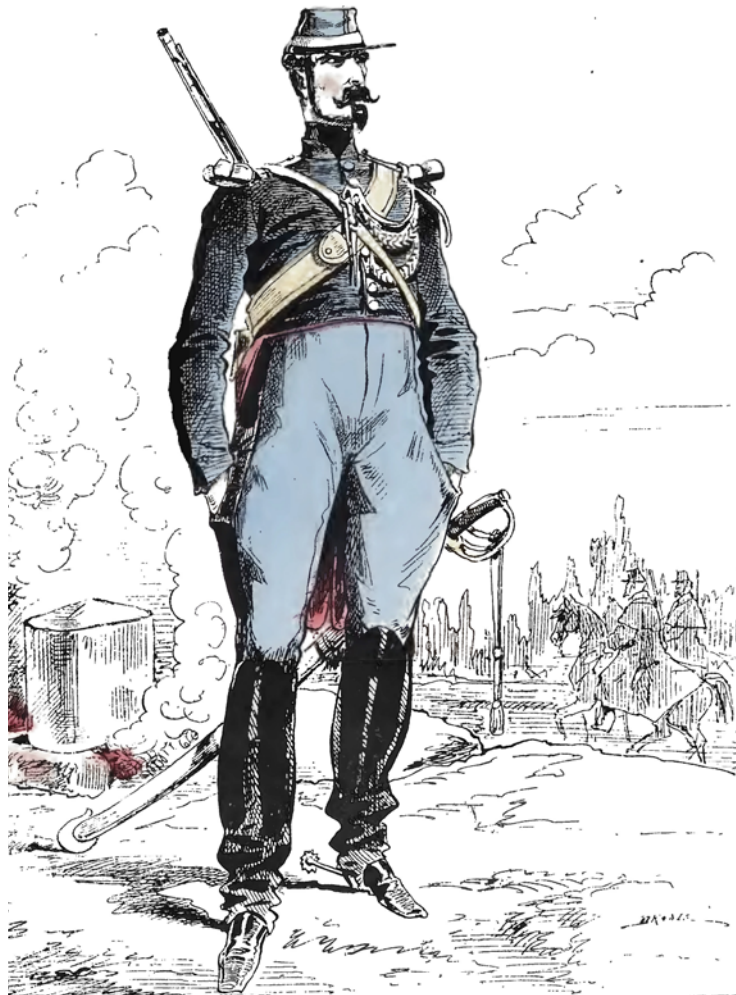
In late December and early January, the beleaguered city's political and social condition worsened. Hope rested on a mass sortie. Eventually, on January 19th, with 100,000 men, an attempt was made from Mont Valérien to pierce the Vth army corps and guard landwehr division's position, aiming for Versailles. Three columns led by Generals Ducrot, Bellemare, and Vinoy were deployed for the attack.

The Prussians had occupied the heights of Garches, as well as the chateau and park of La Bergerie, as a point of support to the position. The French attack, carried out with superior forces and great energy, only caused the Prussian outposts to retire on their supports, but they did not succeed in taking either La Bergerie, which was bravely defended by one battalion of the 59th regiment and a company of jägers, or the village of Garches; General Ducrot arrived on the battlefield too late to co-operate with good effect at the right moment. Meanwhile, the Prussian reserves had come up, and a hard fight ensued for the possession of the heights of Garches. They were stormed about 2 o'clock in the afternoon by two battalions of the King's grenadiers, with 157 detachments of the 59th regiment and the 5th jäger battalion supported on the flank by a battalion of the 47th regiment.

Although, towards the end of the battle, the head of General Ducrot's column was able to join in the fight, still as the darkness came on, the French were repulsed and had to retire under cover of the guns of Fort Mont Valérien. These had been engaged with the Prussian artillery during the day in order to draw off* the fire from the infantry. The 5th light battery of the Vth corps in action at Brézin suffered most; it was at this spot that the Crown Prince of Prussia took up a position during the battle. Towards evening German outposts occupied the same ground as in the morning.

In the attack on Montretout, the French were more successful; the weak garrison of 60 men evacuated the position and fought their way out. The enemy quickly established a foothold and brought guns into action, holding the position until retaken after dark by detachments of the 47th, 58th, and 82nd regiments. Throughout the afternoon and evening, a large French force was observed bivouacking outside the fortress, prompting the Prussians to prepare for a renewed attack. Consequently, a Bavarian brigade and some guard landwehr were moved to Versailles.

German losses amounted to 39 officers and 616 men, while the enemy suffered considerably, with around



Gendarmerie Républicaine

7,000 casualties, including 1,000 dead left on the battlefield. Additionally, a small skirmish occurred on the eastern side of the investing line, where German forces surprised the enemy outpost, capturing 5 officers and 150 men.

On **January 20th**, detachments of the 58th regiment and the 5th jäger battalion captured 18 officers and 320 men in St. Cloud, where they had retreated, anticipating a renewed battle. Despite the constant engagements on the front from repeated sorties, the investing army faced threats in their rear from franc-tireur bands, necessitating the dispatch of large columns against them until the last days of the siege. As late as January 27th, a force consisting of 2 infantry and 2 cavalry regiments with 8 guns marched from the southern post of the investing circle towards Auxerre.

Since the beginning of the investment, the internal condition of Paris had been closely monitored, recognizing that the city's fall would be only a matter of time due to dwindling provisions and increasing political difficulties.

The capitulation of Metz and the defeat of newly formed armies in the south and north had no apparent impact on the defense strategy. Negotiations for an armistice in November, lasting for five days, were ultimately broken off.

Gathering a large siege train

Given these circumstances, a regular siege or bombardment of the capital became inevitable to bring the war to a speedy conclusion. However, the scale of preparations, particularly for the principal attack on the south front, necessitated separate treatment.

A large siege train had to be brought up for the attack, composed partly of guns from the home fortresses and partly from the trains which had been already employed against other French fortresses, but at the same time the sieges then in progress, which required a great amount of material, could not be interrupted. It was not surprising therefore, that exactly the most appropriate guns should not have been used in the artillery attack on the south front, or that the Germans were unprepared for the extraordinarily rapid wear of the guns, which influenced the progress of the siege.

The siege train contained about 300 pieces of ordnance, namely, 70 long 24-prs., 15 short 24-prs., 100 12-prs., 40 6-prs., exclusive of rifled breech-loaders, besides 20 25-pr. shell guns, 20 50-pr. mortars, and 6 rifled 21-cwt. mortars. Each gun was provided with 500 rounds for curved fire with the necessary side arms and stores; the carriages, platform wagons, gyns, etc. with all their gear had to be brought up.

The Ballon guns, of which there were twenty, and which were much spoken of at the time, were not guns but wall pieces, on a small four-wheeled wagon with a platform and spindle moved by means of a ball; they did not, however, succeed.



Officier du Corps des Forestiers

The parking of siege guns for the south front posed significant logistical challenges due to limited rail access and the need for extensive manual labor. Initially, only one rail line through Nancy was available, but it couldn't be fully utilized due to damage to tunnels and bridges over the Marne, requiring repair work. All other bridges along the route had to be inspected and reinforced to support the immense loads.

More than 100,000 cwt. of stores and ammunition had to be transported, necessitating unloading by hand at Meaux and Lagny and then conveying by road to the siege train park at Villa Coublay before Paris, a distance of 12 miles (56 English miles). Special roads had to be constructed for the transports, and bridges were built over the Seine to facilitate movement.

Several thousand draft horses were needed, as the initially requisitioned teams were insufficient, and many drivers deserted, sometimes with their wagons. To address this, twenty-four transport columns, each consisting of 40 wagons, were brought from Germany and equipped partly with French wagons and harnesses taken at Metz. Transport operations for the initial establishment of the siege train took several weeks, requiring continuous effort both day and night, which had to be maintained throughout the siege.

Two Strousberg traction engines were employed to assist with transportation. However, the hilly terrain, soft roads, and slippery conditions in frosty weather and snow posed significant difficulties for the numerous wagons. Despite these challenges, all guns, ammunition, and other stores were successfully conveyed to the artillery park. Special escorts were necessary to protect the convoys against hostile population interference.

These circumstances greatly complicated preparations for the attack on the south front. Unlike the east and north fronts, where materials from Germany were delivered directly to the parks by rail, on the south front, all material had to be transferred to wagons and transported by road for four to five days before reaching its destination. The extensive organization required for a siege park demanded immense energy and foresight to execute effectively. The establishment of engineer parks and depots faced similar challenges.

To the right rear of the gun park, various essential facilities were situated, including store sheds, empty shells, and other projectiles, laboratories, a fuze magazine, and six powder magazines, each equipped with proper guardhouses. These facilities were strategically positioned and shielded from the enemy's view by a surrounding wood. Despite the convenient location of Villa Coublay for siege purposes, additional security measures were deemed necessary. Consequently, three field works were constructed on the plateau of Moulin de la Tour. The central work was armed with a 12-pounder, while the other two each had six rifled 12-pounders.

Constructing the batteries presented significant challenges due to the rocky chalk soil, which later froze to a depth of 1 ½ feet. Laying the platforms required painstaking effort using crowbars and miners' tools. However, the nearby woods provided valuable resources for building the batteries, concealing their



Chirurgiens de la Garde Nationale et de L'Armée

construction until the moment of opening fire. In one instance, an artificial screen was created by planting trees and boughs, effectively hiding the battery construction from the enemy.

The transportation of materials to the batteries involved countless vehicles carrying baulks, platforms, fascines, and gabions. These materials, sourced from the Vth and IIInd Bavarian corps, filled the roads and paths leading to the batteries for months, primarily during the night to avoid detection by the French. The production and accumulation of these materials proved exceptionally challenging given the circumstances. While much of the required equipment was provided, a considerable quantity still had to be obtained through requisition or forwarded from Germany.

The preparations for the siege demanded extensive time and effort due to the diverse array of challenges encountered and the limited daylight hours. Until all necessary elements were in place, the commencement of the attack was not feasible.

The decision regarding the timing and execution of the siege had already been made by the authorities. Any delay in initiating the attack was due to circumstances previously mentioned, the details of which are beyond the scope of this discussion. The plan involved simultaneous attacks on Paris from three sides to compel the enemy to utilize their heavy guns across multiple fronts. Notably, the most rugged terrain was chosen for the artillery assault, and engaging several outer forts might be necessary before reaching the heart of the city. Subsequent sections will provide a brief overview of the different attacks carried out in the east, north, and south, under the direction of Major-General Prince Kraft of Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen, commander of the guard artillery brigade, presented in the order of their execution.

Artillery Attack on the East Front.

The object of the French position on Mont Avron was, in conjunction with the forts in rear, to prepare sorties, and to support them with the fire of the guns; it commanded the valley of the Marne and covered the assembly of troops there, as well as the passages over the Marne, and at the same time it flanked the greater part of German eastern line of investment. These favourable circumstances induced the enemy continually to strengthen this position, so that in the end there were six 30-pounders, six short 24-pounders, twenty-three 7-pounders, thirty-four 12-pounders, seven mitrailleuses, altogether 76 guns distributed in eight batteries; the latter, however, were imperfectly constructed, and unprovided with bombproofs and traverses, on account of the difficulty of working in the frozen ground. The commandant on the plateau of Mont Avron was the well-known and able Colonel Stoffel, who before the war had been attaché to the French embassy in Berlin. There was no intention on the German side of occupying Mont Avron, especially as it lay under the cross-fire of Forts Rosny, Nogent, and Noisy, and of the redoubts Montreuil, La Boissière, and Fontenay, situated in the intervals. German positions were so close that German heavy guns could engage Mont Avron as well as the forts lying behind it.



La Chasse au Diner

Construction of French batteries

A.—On the Plateau of Raincy.

Batteries Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4, armed respectively with six 24-poidmers, six 12-pounders, six short 24-pounders, and four short 24-pounders, altogether 22 guns, directed chiefly against Mont Avron, Fort Rosny, and other less important places, such as the villages of Avron, Rosny, Villemomble, and the redoubts of la Boissiere and Montreuil.

B.—On the Plateau of Mont Fermeil on the side nearest to Gagny.

Batteries Nos. 5, 6, 7, and 8, armed respectively with six 12-pounders, six long 24-pounders, six 12-pounders, and six 12-pounders, total 24 guns, to fire over the same ground as the other batteries, and also to sweep the valley of the Marne. To destroy any bridges that might be thrown over the river and prevent a passage.

C.—In position between Noisy and Gournay.

Batteries Nos. 9 and 10, armed respectively with six 12-pounders and six long 24-pounders, together 12 guns. To fire on the Marne valley and the valley of Villemomble and prevent the assembly of troops in these localities.

D.—In position south-west of Noisy-le-Grand.

Batteries Nos. 11, 12, and 13, each armed Avith six long 24-pounders, making a total of 18 guns to sweep the sides of Mont Avron, the villages of Villemomble and Neuilly, the railway junction, the Fontenay redoubt, and Fort Nogent. The distances of the different batteries from Mont Avron varied from 3,500 to 6,000 paces. The park of artillery was established at Brou, half a league to the east of Chelles, to which were brought 36 rifled 12-pounders, 30 rifled 24-pounders, 10 rifled short 24-pounders, altogether 76 siege guns.

A transport column consisting of 700 wagons was established there, with improvised barracks and stables to accommodate them. Additionally, ten companies of garrison artillery were stationed, all under the command of Colonel Bartsch as the chief of the siege artillery, while Colonel Oppermann supervised the engineering works. Construction of the batteries commenced on the **13th of December**, primarily conducted during the night to avoid detection, except for those on the plateau of Raincy, which were concealed by the surrounding woods. Trench communications were established between the batteries, protected by traverses, and various infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and bombproofs were constructed as needed.

At half-past 7 o'clock on the morning of the **27th of December**, fire was opened from 76 guns, eventually silencing Mont Avron after encountering resistance and causing significant losses among the gun



le Rationnement du Pain

detachments. Although the works in the rear continued to respond to the fire, the German artillery managed to drive the French garrison out of Bondy and the railway station at Noisy le Sec. The French evacuated Mont Avron on the night of the 28th-29th of December, withdrawing under the observation of General Trochu, who had arrived at the scene. Their retreat was executed in an orderly manner, covered by marines and three field batteries.

On the **30th of December**, Saxon detachments occupied Mont Avron and proceeded to level the enemy's works, destroy ammunition, and render the area unusable. Emplacements were then constructed to drive the French out of the villages of Drancy and Bobigny, designated as Nos. 14 and 15. Additionally, batteries Nos. 16 and 17 were built at Chennevières to command the plateau of Villiers. To counter the French positions at Courneuve, Le Bourget, and Drancy, battery No. 1 at Blanc-Mesnil, and batteries Nos. 2 and 3 at Pont Iblon were established, armed with a total of 18 guns to prevent any offensive movement from that direction. Some of these batteries were later advanced to Le Bourget, enabling them to support the attack on the north front, particularly against St. Denis.

On the **2nd and 3rd of January** a heavy fire from the siege batteries was continued against the whole of the east front, and was only replied to feebly from Fort Nogent.

As the east front had always been considered the strongest of the Paris defences, German successes against Mont Avron had raised a great alarm in the city, and ignorance of the military circumstances had caused an unreasonable despondency, as well as distrust in their military chief. Meanwhile the enemy remained in possession of the villages of Bondy, Bobigny, Drancy, and Rosny, and disturbed German outposts from those places by frequent alarms; thus, on the nights of the **10th and 15th of January** the Saxon outposts were attacked on the railway in advance of Aulnay and at Nonneville, whilst the same thing happened to the Guards in Le Bouiget three times during the night of the 14th of January. On account of these offensive movements, the siege batteries bombarded those places for 48 hours on the **16th of January**, the results of which could only be determined by a reconnaissance of detachments of the 2nd division of foot. These three batteries formed at the same time the left wing of the attack on the north front. 163 guards against Drancy, and of the 23rd infantry division against Groslay farm, on which occasion 5 officers and 130 men were taken prisoners. On the night of the **26th-27th of January** the batteries of the attack ceased firing.

Artillery Attack against the South Front

The command here was entrusted to Colonel von Rietf, President of the committee on artillery experiments. This officer had arrived before Paris towards the end of September; the special reconnaissances, and all arrangements for the preparation and execution of the attack had been carried out under his orders. There were at his disposal 80 companies of garrison artillery, with their staff, and a numerous body belonging to the store department for duty in the various parks and depots. The following batteries were constructed:-



Tirailleurs Parisiens

A.–Left Wing.

- Battery No. 1 (St. Cloud) for six 12-pounders.
- Battery No. 2 (Meudon) for eight 12-pounders.
- Both these batteries to act against Billancourt, the Bois de Boulogne, and the islands in the Seine.
- Battery No. 3 (Meudon) six 24-pounders.
- Battery No. 4 (Meudon) six 24-pounders.
- These batteries to counter-battery and enfilade the south and west fronts of Fort Issy.
- Dismounting battery No. 16 (Meudon) four 12-pounders, to fire against the gun emplacements at Fort Issy.
- Dismounting and breaching battery No. 19 (Fleury and Clamart) armed with four long and four short 24-pounders, against the south front of Fort Issy, the long 24-pounders against the Paris enceinte.
- Dismounting battery No. 20 (Clamart) for six long 24-pounders, to fire against the south front and the north-west bastion of Fort Vanvres.

B.–Centre.

- Enfilade and dismounting battery No. 5 (Clamart), six 24-pounders, against the south-west curtain and the south bastion of Fort Issy.
- Enfilade battery No. 6 (Clamart), six 24-pounders, against the south-east front of Fort Vanvres.
- Enfilade and dismounting battery No. 7 (Moulin de la Tour) for six 24-pounders, against the south front and the south-west bastion of Fort Issy.
- Dismounting battery No. 17 (Moulin de la Tour) for six 12-pounders, against the emplacements between Forts Issy and Vanvres.
- Dismounting and breaching battery No. 8 (Moulin de la Tour) for six 24-pounders, against the south front of Fort Vanvres.
- Enfilade and dismounting battery No. 9 (Moulin de la Tour) for eight 12-pounders, to fire on the west front of Vanvres and its south-west bastion.
- Enfilade and breaching battery No. 10 (Moulin de la Tour) for six 24-pounders, against the south and west front of Fort Vanvres.
- Dismounting battery No. 21 (Chatillon) six short 24-pounders, directed against the south-west front of Vanvres, and the neighbouring gun emplacements.

C.–Rigid Wing.

- Enfilade and dismounting battery No. 11 (Fontenoy) with eight 12-pounders, to fire on the west front of Fort Montrouge.



La Requisition des Chevaux

- Enfilade and dismounting battery No. 12 (Fontenoy) eight 24-pounders, also to fire against the west front of Fort Montrouge.
- Dismounting battery No. 18 (Chatillon) for six 24-pounders, to fire against Fort Montrouge, the emplacements to the west of it, and the city.
- Dismounting and enfilade battery No. 22 (Chatillon) for six 12-pounders, with the same object as No. 18.
- D.—Batteries for vertical fire.
- Mortar battery No. 13 for two rifled mortars at the Tour des Anglais, to fire against Fort Issy.
- Mortar battery No. 14, armed like No. 13, to fire against Fort Vanvres.
- Mortar battery No. 15, armed like No. 13, against Fort Montrouge.
- Mortar battery No. 23 for four 50-pounder mortars against Fort Issy.
- Mortar battery No. 24, armed like No. 23, against Fort Vanvres.

In order to secure the right flank of the artillery attack, against which the French made particular exertions, especially from Villejuif, and to occupy the enemy's batteries there continuously, a flank attack was organised on the line La Rue-Chevilly, under command of General von Ramm, to be carried on independently. The park attached to it was at Rungis, and two batteries, each for six 12-pounders, were at first built in the given line, but afterwards advanced somewhat nearer to Villejuif.

The original armament of, some of the batteries was changed in the course of the siege operations to meet the alterations in the range; the greatest distance was 4,000 paces, and the smallest 1,700 paces; during the last days of the bombardment, the interior of the city was the object of attack of nearly all the batteries, some of which sent their projectiles to a distance of 12,000 paces.

The garrisons of Forts Issy, Vanvres, and Montrouge observed the ground in their front, by means of outposts and piquets, patrols from which had frequent small collisions with ours; thus on the 16th December 1870, two companies advancing from Fort Tssy attempted to occupy the village of Meudon, but were repulsed by the Prussian outposts, leaving five wounded behind them.

With the aim of gaining ground on the German side, the French outposts were forcefully driven out of Bas Meudon, Le Moulineaux, and Fleury shortly after midnight on the **3rd of January**, with strong reserves brought up for support. Concurrently, on the same night, the arming of the German batteries was finalized; however, the opening of fire on the **4th of January** had to be delayed due to foggy conditions. To divert attention from the impending attack on the south front, the XIIth corps received orders to conduct demonstrations on the east side.

On the **4th of January**, the 24th division conducted a reconnaissance from Chelles against Fort Nogent, while



South of Paris

demolitions on Mont Avron were actively pursued to create the impression that German batteries were being established there. Simultaneously, two battalions of the 101st regiment and a light battery advanced against Neuilly sur Marne, briefly occupying part of the village before evacuating it under cover of night. This maneuver prompted the enemy to increase their forces in the area, remaining on alert until morning.

Continuing the demonstrations on the **5th of January**, the focus shifted primarily towards the villages of Nogent and Rosny. The 2nd battalion of the 105th regiment and the 3rd battalion of the 106th regiment, accompanied by a light battery, were directed against Nogent, while threats were made against the enemy's outposts from Mont Avron. Additionally, the 3rd battalion of the 101st regiment was dispatched against the garrison of Bondy. Various troop movements occurred in this district, with Saxon detachments eventually retreating to their original positions after completing their assigned tasks.

Meanwhile, the French maintained an intense barrage from 31 guns against the German artillery position on the plateau of Raincy from the **31st of December to the 5th of January**. Throughout this period, the artillery of the defense on the east front remained largely inactive.

During these occurrences on the east front, the arming of the German batteries on the south front had been completed without molestation; on the **5th of January**, towards morning, the French made several small sorties against the outposts on the hill of Clamart. The latter had occupied the summit of the hill, and were attacked during the previous night, three times in succession, on the last occasion with one battalion, which, however, retired when the bombardment opened. The 80th regiment also repulsed a sortie made against Meudon.

On the **5th of January**, as soon as the fog permitted a good view of the enemy's position, the batteries opened their fire. which had been ordered to commence at half-past 8 o'clock

On January 6th, the principal attack was launched against Forts Issy, Vanvres, and Montrouge from batteries No. 1 to 17, while a collateral attack targeted the entrenchments at Villejuif and the gunboats on the Seine. Due to space constraints, a detailed account of the artillery battle cannot be provided here, but it is worth noting that the French artillery, particularly from the main enceinte and the batteries at the Point du Jour, displayed significant activity, proving to be a formidable opponent that often forced German batteries to combine their strength to counter effectively.

The weather on January 6th was clear, and although the fire from Fort Issy was temporarily silenced, Fort Mont Valérien retaliated by firing into St. Cloud, Bougival, and Vaucresson. Additionally, four new batteries at the Point du Jour were unmasked, engaging Battery No. 1 and targeting the plateau of Meudon. Forts Issy and Vanvres maintained a slow rate of fire, while Fort Montrouge directed heavy fire towards the redoubt of Moulin de la Tour, occupied by Bavarian forces, and the village of Clamart. German fire was concentrated on Fort Issy and extended towards Paris, focusing on the Point du Jour and adjacent



Garde Nationale Sédentaire

batteries on the railway embankment and aqueduct, resulting in fires breaking out in several locations near the Point du Jour.

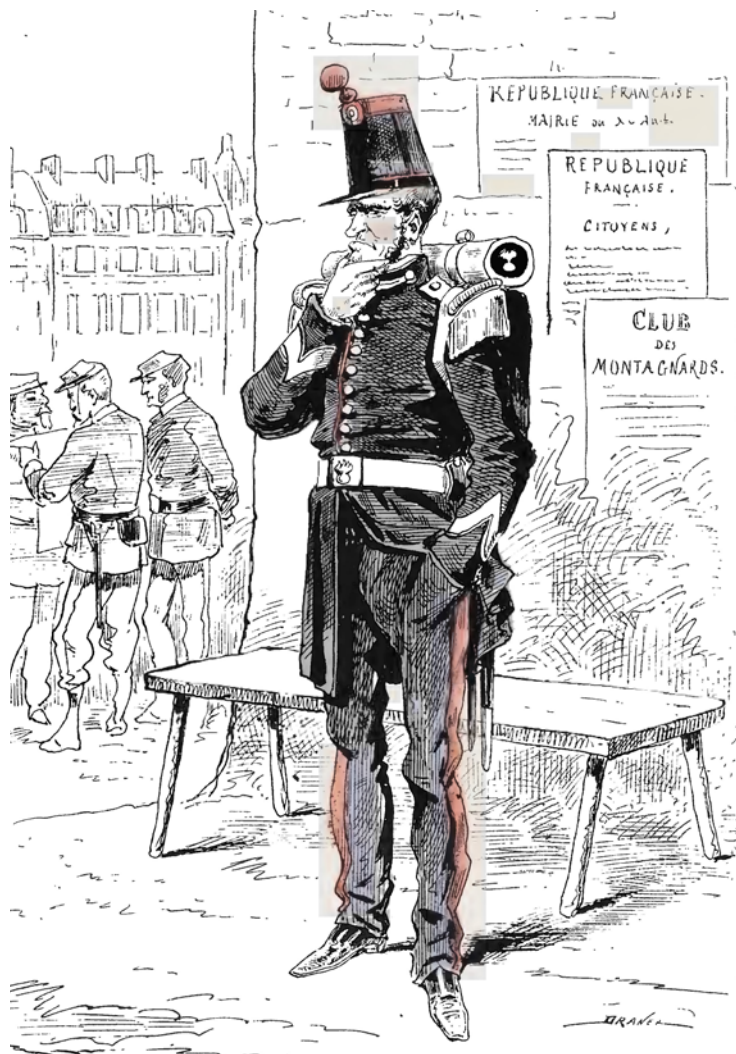
On **January 7th and 8th**, thick weather persisted, but the firing continued, causing barracks in Forts Vanvres and Montrouge to catch fire. German projectiles reached distances of 9,000 to 9,500 paces, reaching the gardens of the Luxembourg Palace. Within Fort Issy, revetments and buildings were demolished, although the fort responded with weakened fire. Fort Vanvres maintained only sporadic firing, while Montrouge remained engaged with Bavarian batteries at Moulin de la Tour, with fires breaking out in one of the fort's barracks. The artillery battle against the Point du Jour and nearby batteries persisted, resulting in some batteries being silenced temporarily, but the fortress's well-coordinated defense and extensive frontage enabled swift replacements.

The authority of the Governor, General Trochu, over the Parisian populace was beginning to be shaken; he yielded to the pressure put on him and allowed himself to be hampered by a council of eight members; in a proclamation issued he repudiated the idea of a capitulation.

January 9th – The object of German fire now was to prevent the enemy from constructing new earthworks for gun emplacements, communications, etc.; the reply to it from his positions was less energetic; it seemed as if the enemy were engaged in withdrawing the heavy calibres from the advanced positions. As the day was foggy, with continuous driving snow, the batteries of attack were ordered to slacken their fire. The government of Paris made a protest against the bombardment of the city, which, considering that the siege had now been in progress for three months and a half, and that in the conduct of the defence neither towns, villages, nor palaces on their own soil had been spared, was naturally rejected; on the **8th-9th of January** some of the batteries received orders to bombard the inner portions of the town. At 8.30pm, Le Val was attacked by the 10th company of the 87th regiment, and a subdivision of the 11th company of the same regiment was sent against Moulineaux, as the enemy had located himself again in these places; after a good resistance he was driven out, and the besiegers by the capture of these places were enabled to approach from 1,500 to 1,600 paces nearer to Fort Issy.

January 10th – On January 10th, at 3 o'clock in the morning, some chasseurs managed to infiltrate a new battery on the hill of Clamart, which had only opened fire on that day. However, the covering party successfully drove them out again. This location was of utmost importance for both the attack and defense, and its control had been contested by the outposts for weeks. Similar minor skirmishes occurred at other points, likely aimed at impeding German advances. The German artillery continued its relentless barrage, met with limited retaliation from the enemy. Meanwhile, fires blazed in several parts of Paris, with the battery at St. Cloud targeting Billancourt and the Bois de Boulogne.

On **January 11th**, a heavy bombardment targeted the enemy's works and gun emplacements. The barracks in Fort Issy were set ablaze, along with several houses in the suburbs of Gentilly and Vaugirard, and in the northeast part of the city. German projectiles reached as far as the church of St. Sulpice, a



Garde Nationale (Old Uniform)

distance of 10,000 paces, and in the more exposed streets of Paris, the stone paving was torn up. The enemy skillfully utilized entrenchments to construct new batteries and reposition guns. Additionally, the garrison of Fort Mont Valérien attempted a reconnaissance against German outposts at St. Germain but was forced to retreat quickly.

On January 12th, continuous fog hampered German fire for the past two days, with the enemy responding vigorously from the main enceinte. Taking advantage of the fog, the garrison of Montrouge managed to mount fresh guns. German projectiles reached deep into the town beyond the Luxembourg Palace. However, the plan to storm the south forts, once considered necessary by some authorities, was abandoned. In line with the original intention, a parallel line had been constructed between Clamart and Chatillon, 1,500 paces from Forts Issy and Vanvres, forming the basis of a potential attack against those forts.

A decree issued by the provisional government ensured that citizens wounded by enemy shells would receive the same pension entitlements as military personnel.

January 13th – On account of the continued fog the fire on both sides was slack. During the previous night a vigorous sortie of the French, by a force of about 4,000 mobiles stationed in and behind the forts, was repulsed by detachments of the XIth corps at Meudon and by the IInd Bavarian corps at Clamart.

January 14th – The fire from the besiegers' batteries was continued; the three forts of Issy, Vanvres, and Montrouge had almost ceased to fire, but the latter made an attempt to reply with field guns when there was a favourable opportunity.

January 15th – After great labour and exertion battery No. 1 (St. Cloud) managed to silence the French batteries established at the Point du Jour in the south bastion, and was enabled now to continue its fire against the three batteries in the north bastion and the town. Prussian projectiles were thrown as far as the church of Notre Dame and the Jardin des Plantes. The dissatisfaction and ferment increased to such an extent in the town, that General Troclui had publicly to contradict the report that several generals had been committed for treachery.

January 16th – Battery No. 21 opened fire to-day to demolish the casemates in Fort Issy.

January 17th and 18th – The enemy showed great energy in re-arming along his front and in the unexpected unmasking of guns, which had been mounted in emplacements within the entrenchments.

On the momentous occasion of **January 18, 1871**, amid the resounding echoes of the siege batteries, King William of Prussia ascended to a new pinnacle of authority, accepting for himself and his descendants the illustrious title of Emperor. This title was tendered to him by the German princes and free towns, accompanied by a solemn pledge to uphold, in the true spirit of German fidelity, the rights of the empire and its constituent members. Additionally, the Emperor vowed to safeguard peace and, with the



Corps of Douaniers

unwavering support of his people, to safeguard the independence of Germany—a legacy that had been magnificently upheld by Prussia's monarchs for 170 years.

The historic ceremony unfolded within the grandeur of the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles, an iconic setting befitting the gravity of the occasion. The august presence of the German princes and dignitaries, together with representatives of the valiant German Army, lent an air of solemnity and significance to the proceedings. In this hallowed space, amidst the echoes of history and the weight of destiny, King William embraced his new imperial mantle, symbolizing the dawn of a new era for Germany and the world.

January 19th – Notwithstanding the sortie from Fort Mont Valérien against the heights of Garches, the guns on both sides kept up an uninterrupted fire.

January 20th – There was a slackening of the fire from the artillery of the defence, probably in consequence of the failure of the sortie of the previous day; thus, the fire from Montrouge, where the guns had been admirably fought, almost ceased towards mid-day; in the batteries at the Point du Jour the fire ceased altogether for a time; the eastern barracks in Fort Vanvres were set in flames. General Trochu sent General Count d'Herison to the commander of the 3rd army to demand an armistice of 48 hours, which, however, was only conceded on the line from St. Cloud to Garches for a sufficient time to bury the dead.

January 21st and 22nd – Heavy fire from the batteries adjoining the Point du Jour and the emplacements between the three south forts; among the latter a French redoubt constructed ill the interval between Forts Vanvres and Montrouge distinguished itself particularly; it required nearly a whole day for German batteries to master it. A powder magazine in rear of Claraart was blown up. Insurrectionary movements of the Parisian populace were observed.

January 23rd – Lively fire from the enceinte of the city; fresh batteries were unmasked by the French at the entrance to the Bois de Boulogne. The artillery of the attack did not allow itself be troubled by this, but managed to silence several batteries of the main enceinte, and subdue the fire of the field battery which had been so active on the previous day.

January 24th – The fire of the besiegers' batteries could only be continued at intervals on account of the fog, the enemy replying but feebly. A serious outbreak occurred in Paris in which the prison of Mazas was stormed, the prisoners liberated, and the granaries with supplies of bread and wine plundered by the mob; in front of the Hotel de Ville the national guard fired on the insurgents.

January 25th – The enemy attempted, under cover of the fog, to construct earthworks in and round Fort Issy, but were prevented. The bombardment continued as on the previous days.

January 26th – Clear weather; the bombardment was only weakly answered from the enceinte of the city, from Fort Montrouge and from the emplacements between Forts Vanvres and Issy; notwithstanding the



Garde Nationale Sédentaire

weather being clear the artillery of the defence were unable to accomplish anything. Equally futile was the heavy fire from the battery at the Point du Jour against No.1 battery. The batteries in front of Claniart were fired at but slightly from the fortifications of the town and from Fort Montrouge, and the neighbouring mortar batteries scarcely at all.

January 27th – After midnight the batteries on both sides ceased firing by common consent.

During the relentless 22-day bombardment, the German artillery suffered significant losses, totaling 12 officers and 200 men killed and wounded. To attend to the wounded and provide medical care, field hospitals were established at Malabry and Sceaux, with the principal hospital set up at Igny, strategically positioned between Versailles and Palaiseau.

In response to the demanding engineering needs of the siege, Lieutenant-General von Kamecke, who had previously commanded the 14th Division during the campaign, was reassigned from Mezieres to Paris. His new role tasked him with assuming overall command of the engineering works vital to the success of the attack.

The exhaustive efforts of the engineering corps during the intense artillery bombardment encompassed a wide array of tasks. These included establishing covered communications between batteries, constructing shelter trenches and traverses, providing assistance in the erection of batteries and powder magazines, and organizing shell stores and observation posts. Additionally, engineers undertook the construction of underground storerooms, meticulously designed to withstand bombardment, and fortified barracks to serve as secure guardhouses.

Despite the challenges posed by water-filled trenches in some areas, exacerbating the difficulties of their use, such challenges were intrinsic to winter sieges. The natural accumulation of surface and subsoil drainage within the trenches, following the contours of the terrain, presented a persistent obstacle that could only be mitigated to a limited extent. Nonetheless, the engineering corps persevered in their crucial tasks, ensuring that the siege operations proceeded with as much efficiency and effectiveness as possible given the prevailing conditions.

Artillery Attack against the North Front (St. Denis).

The fortifications of St. Denis, while formidable, suffer from a significant flaw: they lack sufficient elevation to be shielded from the hills in front. This deficiency exposes them to enemy observation and fire, rendering some parts vulnerable to attack, even from the works of the gorge.

A significant sortie took place at Epinay le St. Denis on December 21st, targeting the troops stationed along the investing line at that location. The coordinated action involved gunboats on the Seine but was ultimately repelled by Prussian batteries positioned at Orgemont and Enghien.



État Major de la Garde Nationale

The presence of French forces at Mont Avron posed a strategic obstacle for German batteries on the northeast front, preventing them from advancing closer due to the effective flanking fire from both sides. However, the capture of Mont Avron, coupled with the unsuccessful French sortie against Le Bourget on December 21st, demonstrated to the enemy the futility of attacking the Guards' position. Subsequently, the French defense at that point waned in intensity, allowing Prussian batteries to focus their fire on villages such as Drancy, Bobigny, Bondy, and Rosny, with significant impact. Forts like Noisy and Rosny were only sporadically targeted.

To prepare for the crucial bombardment of St. Denis, a special siege train was organized, comprising guns previously employed at Mezieres and Peronne. This train included 26 long 24-pounders, 10 short 24-pounders, 82 12-pounders, and 3 rifled mortars. Preparations for the assault commenced on January 10th, with the establishment of the siege train park at Gonesse railway station and a transport park for 700 wagons at Ecoen. Material for constructing batteries was gathered in depots at Arnouville and Montmorency. To expedite construction, emplacements were prepared by personnel from the field artillery and pioneers of the guard and 4th corps. A total of 15 batteries were established for the assault.

- Batteries Nos. 1, 2, and 3, armed each with six long 24-pounders, and six 12-pounders to fire against Drancy, Bobigny, and La Courneuve.
- Battery No. 4, armed with eight long 24-pounders, against Fort Aubervilliers and the suburb of La Yvette.
- Batteries Nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, armed respectively with six long 24-pounders, six short 24-pounders, eight 12-pounders, and three rifled mortars against the fort and village of Aubervilliers, Fort de l'Est, Double Couronne, Fort de la Briche, and St. Denis.
- Batteries Nos. 10 and 11, each armed with six long 24-pounders and eight 12-pounders, against the fortifications of St. Denis and the Seine.
- Battery No. 12, armed with six long 24-pounders to fire at the same objects.
- Batteries Nos. 18, 14, and 15, armed with eight 12-pounders, four short, and six long 24-pounders, against Forts de la Briche, Double Couronne, and the whole fortress of St. Denis.

All these batteries opened fire on the **21st of January**.

A cursory look at the map reveals the besiegers' advantageous position, allowing for a concentric barrage against St. Denis, the collateral forts, and French positions overall. By **January 22nd**, the bombardment had nearly silenced the fire from St. Denis, with the town ablaze in multiple areas. The repulsion of the **January 19th** sortie, combined with the effective bombardment against Parisian fortifications (excluding Mont Valérien), stoked significant discord and discontent among the city's populace.

This unrest culminated in serious uprisings, prompting a significant reorganization of leadership on **January 23rd**. General Vinoy assumed chief command of the Parisian army, while General Trochu retained a governmental role only.



Les Effets de Bombardement

Meanwhile, from **January 25th to 26th**, the bombardment of the north front proceeded unabated until the cessation of fire on the night of January 26th-27th.

On the evening of **January 28th**, a three-day armistice was declared, negotiated by Jules Favre, the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Parisian Government. The terms, settled with a military commission from the capital, included the immediate surrender of all forts and the disarmament of the main enceinte. Troops of the line, marines, and mobile guards were to become prisoners of war, except for 12,000 men tasked with maintaining order within Paris. The garde nationale and gendarmerie were permitted to retain their arms. All franc-tireur units were to disband, and the Germans would aid French commissaries in provisioning Paris. Residents seeking to leave the city required permits from French authorities, with German approval. The Paris municipality was to pay a 200 million franc contribution within 11 days, and public property could not be removed during the armistice.

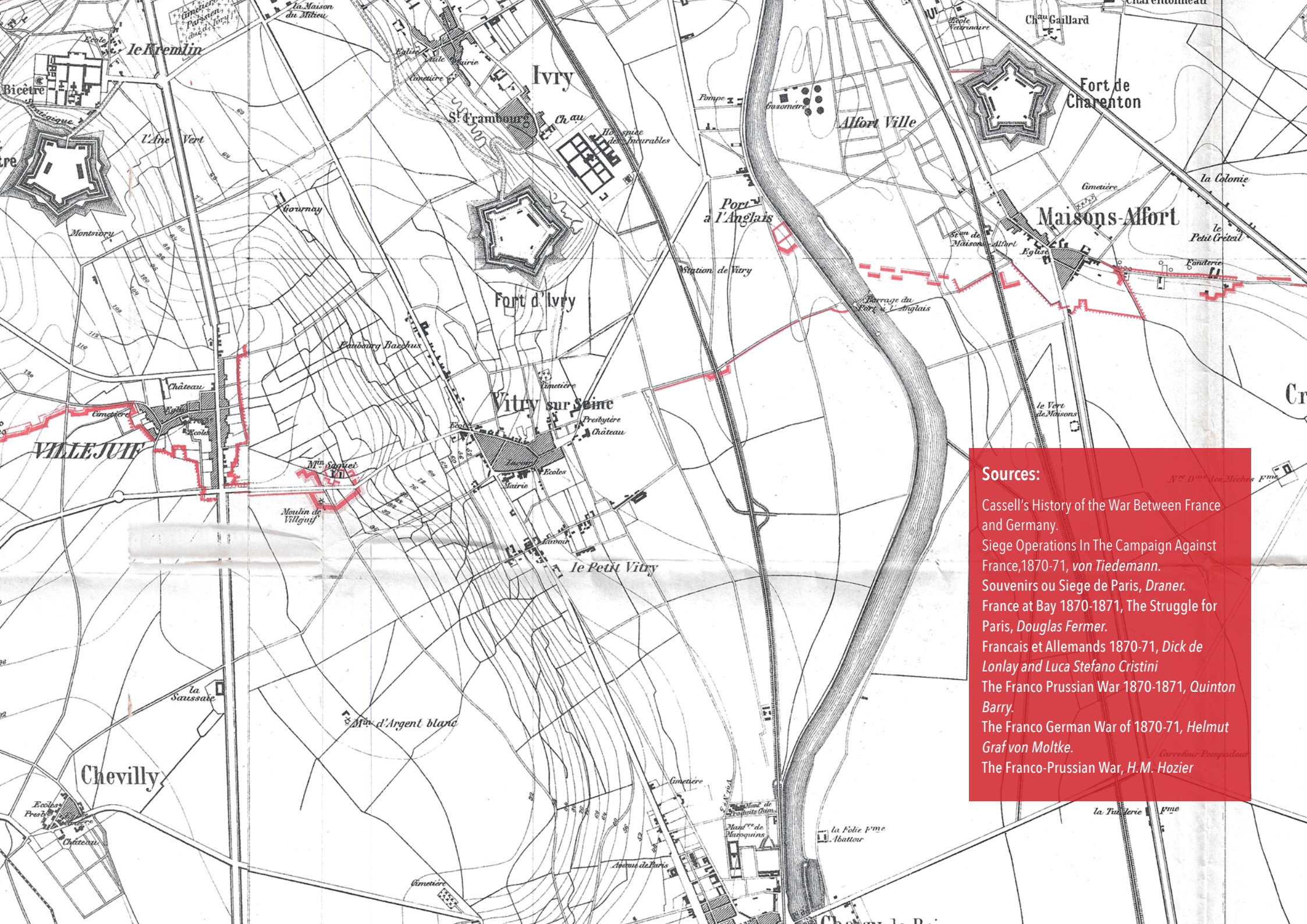
In accordance with these terms, on **January 29th**, at 11 o'clock in the morning, all forts except Vincennes were occupied by the besieging army after careful reconnaissance for mines. German forces assumed control of various forts, with corresponding adjustments to outpost positions. Work commenced on fortifications in occupied areas, and new batteries were erected at strategic intervals between the south forts, poised to resume bombardment if necessary.

Near 200,000 Chassepot rifles, 600 field guns, and 1,300 garrison guns fell into the hands of the victors. The total loss of the Paris army during the siege is given as 17,000 killed. On the **1st of March** 10,000 men from each of the VIth and XIth Prussian corps, and the IIInd Bavarian corps, marched into the Bois de Boulogne, where they were to remain two days for a review which the Emperor King was to hold in the Champs Elysée and the adjoining part of the town.

Lieutenant-General Kamecke acted as commandant of that part of Paris which was occupied by the German troops. The latter were to be relieved on the **3rd of March** by a body of equal strength from the guard corps, the siege artillery, and pioneers, and the King's grenadiers, which had been specially recalled from Orleans for the purpose. This, however, never took place, as the ratification of the preliminaries of peace by which the town was to be evacuated at once arrived from Bordeaux on the day before. His Majesty nevertheless, held a review on Longchamps, and on the same day

German troops marched out of Paris.

The German armies now retired behind the line of the Seine; those troops which were prevented by the circumstances mentioned above from passing in review before His Majesty in Paris, namely, the Xth Saxon corps, the 1st Bavarians, and the Württemberg division, were inspected by the King at Villiers. This brings to a close the description which we have given in broad outline of the glorious siege of Paris, which was carried on during four months and a half with an expenditure of men and material on both sides, quite without parallel in the history of war; no other siege can be compared with it either for military importance or political consequences.



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