

Vengeance is Coming.



Blücher

The new game from Sam Mustafa, coming in 2015.

***"I will not sit in inactivity while other
brave men fight for the liberation of
our German fatherland!"***

— Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher



Rügen is a sprawling, wooded island in the Baltic Sea, home to old Viking castles just off the north German coast. It was there in early 1807, not far from his boyhood home in Mecklenburg, that Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher assembled a motley army of Prussian remnants and recent recruits, reinforced by a few British and Swedish units. Barely ten thousand men strong, it was the last significant force remaining to the shattered Prussian army in that cold, disastrous winter.

Napoleon was everywhere victorious. French troops had long ago marched through Berlin and confiscated their trophies: the victory chariot from atop the Brandenburg Gate, the hat and sword of Frederick the Great, even private articles from Queen Louise's bedchamber in Charlottenburg. That last violation infuriated Blücher the most. The beautiful Queen, in his mind the symbol of the feminine nation that a man is sworn to defend, had fled from her capital across the frozen coast lands, and her soldiers had been unable to protect her.

Some people require a great crisis in order to thrive. Blücher was 65 and should have been thinking of retirement. He had served adequately in the army for most of his long life, albeit not in any exemplary fashion. But now, facing the existential crisis of the Prussian kingdom, Blücher alone seemed to retain that ferocious grit and determination that had once characterized the men who wore the famous blue coats. Something fierce animated this old man. People explained it as hatred or foolishness, or an exaggerated patriotism or nationalism or a sense of personal honor. Whatever it was, it was all that Prussia had left.

That summer, when the news reached Rügen that Napoleon had again defeated the Russians and that a surrender was at last imminent, Blücher's response was: "Over my dead body."

He nearly got his wish. As the Prussian kingdom was eviscerated by the surrender terms, its army reduced to a fifth of its former size, Blücher also seemed to be dying. He began to suffer from migraines and fevers. Nonetheless the younger generation of Prussian officers, who were planning the reform and ultimate resurrection of the state and army, could not imagine anyone but Blücher at their head. He was kept informed of their work by letters and a constant stream of visitors and well-wishers.

After Christmas 1808 he took to his bed. Soon the old general was demented and babbling, often so weak that he could not rise. But the loyalty of his friends never wavered. Scharnhorst wrote to him: "You are our leader and our hero ... even if we have to carry you in front of us on a litter!"

Miraculously, he began to recover. In mid-1809, as rebellions sprang up across northern Germany during the Austrian war, Blücher was as frustrated by his health as by the emasculated Prussian kingdom. But the war of liberation did not come, and by 1810 Prussia seemed as bankrupt and broken as ever. That July, Queen Louise died of lung cancer. Blücher mourned her as "our good angel." The Prussians could not know it at the time, but they had at last reached the bottom.

The fault lines of European history shifted under his feet. As word of the scale of Napoleon's disaster in Russia began to penetrate central Europe, the Prussian activists knew at last that their time had come. Amidst frantic preparations to cobble together an army, desperately-needed supplies and money trickled in from Britain. It was barely enough. Many recruits trained in civilian clothes, armed with sticks or brooms.

It is hard to overstate the chaos of early 1813 in Germany. Rampaging cossack and free corps units clashed with French garrisons across hundreds of miles. Blücher received command of the Prussian "corps" in the new allied army under Russian leadership. As the two amateur armies groped at each other with clumsy violence, Napoleon once again established the upper hand. The Summer armistice allowed the reinforced allies to reorganize, and Blücher finally received an independent army command.

For the next year he commanded the Army of Silesia: the smallest but most vigorous of the allied forces closing the ring against Napoleon. In this extraordinary evening of his life he fought a dozen pitched battles across Germany and into France. He held the French at the Katzbach, dug into Napoleon's flank at Leipzig, and pursued the French back to the icy Rhine, where on New Year's Day 1814 he took his avenging army across to begin the campaign of retribution, and as he put it, "to hear things go smash!" Four months of nearly constant combat ensued.

He was sick again, his head splitting with pain as the allied armies approached the enemy capital and began to fight their way in. Informed that his soldiers had at last entered Paris, he rose, stepped from his carriage and said, "**Sie ist gerächt.**"

"She is avenged."

He may have meant Louise, Prussia, or History herself.

***Blücher* is the fourth game in the HONOUR series by Sam Mustafa. It is a game about the great battles of the Napoleonic Wars.**

Will it be a card-driven game like *Maurice* and *Longstreet* ?

No. *Blücher* uses an entirely new system for variable turn length and unpredictable, limited opportunities.

I already have figures mounted for *Grande Armée*, or *Lasalle*. Can I use them for *Blücher* ?

Yes. Like all HONOUR games, the scale is very flexible. You can take figures based for any system and create units with them.

How many figures will I need in order to play?

That depends on the size of game that you choose to play, and how you choose to base them. Each unit in *Blücher* is one base. A typical game might involve two dozen units per player. The size of the bases and the numbers of figures on them, is up to you.

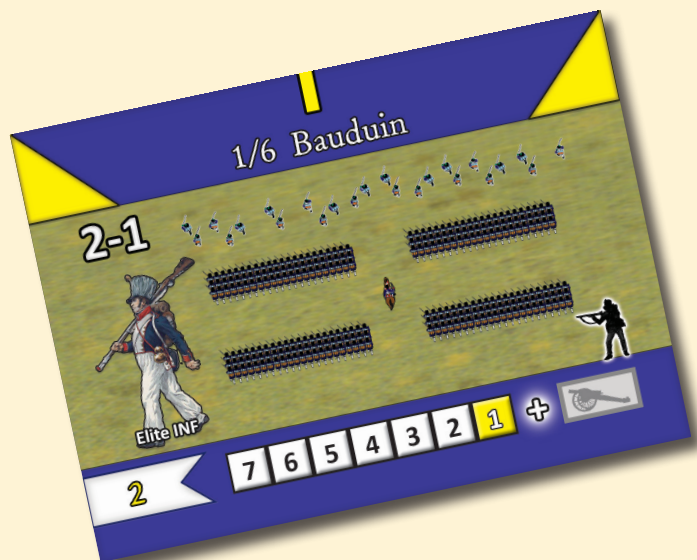
How many people can play?

Any number. *Blücher* can provide a modest two-player game, or a grand club project of a famous (or fictional) battle with many players and large collections.

What will it cost? What will be the format? When, exactly, will it be for sale?

Blücher will be available as a full-color book, and also as a PDF. Exact book size, pages, and cost have not yet been determined. More detailed information is coming this winter, once the book layout is complete. The game will appear in 2015. A precise date has not yet been set.





***Blücher* is a tabletop game that can be played with miniatures and terrain, OR with unit cards on any flat surface.**

Unlike all of its predecessors, *Blücher* can be played entirely without miniature figures.

If you do not have a large collection of Napoleonic miniatures, or if you want to introduce new players to the period, or if you simply want to set up a game more quickly and play anywhere, with or without terrain, *Blücher* can be played with Unit Cards. These are normal poker-sized cards that contain all the key information for a unit, and also keep track of a unit's condition, thus requiring no markers or rosters.

A sample introductory scenario with free unit cards will be provided online, as well as blank unit card forms, for players to make their own.

Professionally-printed, finished unit cards will also be offered separately in sets for specific historical campaigns, if players wish to purchase them. These can be covered with plastic protectors and marked with a dry-erase marker, to use any number of times.

Why would I want to play a miniatures game using cards instead of figures? What's the point of that?

The cards enable us to do things that miniatures can't do. For example, all units begin the game concealed (i.e., flipped to their backs), creating a wonderful fog of war that leaves you guessing about your opponent's moves and what he still has in reserve. They also allow units to interpenetrate and "stack" temporarily in ways that are impossible with miniatures.

And of course, the unit cards are a cheap, fast, and simple way to introduce a new player to the fun of Napoleonic gaming, without asking him to spend the money or time to create a huge army first.

Or, perhaps you simply want to play a big Napoleonic game with a friend, but only have a few hours and limited space. The unit cards enable you to take *Blücher* virtually anywhere with a flat surface.

Will there be a campaign system? An army builder? Historical scenarios?

Blücher features an army-building system for players to create fictional and "pick-up" games, but of course it can also be used to recreate famous historical battles.

The advanced rules include a campaign system called *Scharnhorst* that also acts as a "pre-game." Players make decisions about reconnaissance and attempt to locate their enemy and bring him to battle on the most favorable terms. Should you send more of your cavalry out as scouts... even though they will arrive at the battle exhausted and less effective? Are you facing an opponent who has natural advantages in this environment, such as Russian cossacks or Spanish guerrillas? If so, then maybe you should adopt a less-risky approach, lest you are caught with only part of your army deployed and the rest strung out along the line of march. Or perhaps you face a slower, less-vigorous opponent? In that case, take the risk to attempt to outflank him... unless you think he will guess your move and respond accordingly.

Your decisions in *Scharnhorst* determine the scenario, victory conditions, reinforcements, and even the terrain. It is a fun, tense, and interesting way to create fictional games, so that no two battles are alike, much less predictable or boring.

I have a million questions about how the game works, and how it represents this and that...

Now you know how Wellington felt, waiting for Blücher to arrive.

More detailed descriptions of the game and its components will be sent out by the end of 2014. In the meantime, keep a stiff upper lip and carry on!