

# The First Battle of Polotsk

Age of Eagles Scenario  
by GRW, 2010

## SETTING

**Date:** 17 August 1812, 9:00 AM

**Location:** 60 miles northwest of Vitebsk, Russia

**Combatants:** French Empire vs. Imperial Russia

**History:** As Napoleon directed the main advance toward Moscow, Marshal Oudinot's II Corps protected the northern flank. Only General Wittgenstein's Russian I Corps blocked the French from marching all the way to St. Petersburg. Impatient with Oudinot's timidity, Napoleon dispatched St.-Cyr's weak Bavarian corps to bolster the French effort to defeat Wittgenstein.

By the morning of August 17, 1812, Oudinot's 20,000 French and St.-Cyr's 12,000 Bavarians lingered at Polotsk. A rural town along the Dvna River, Polotsk represented a crucial road junction in northern Russia. Believing the Russians too weak to bother him, Oudinot had carelessly deployed his force on both banks of the Dvna River, spread out and vulnerable to attack. Wittgenstein recognized this weakness, and hoped to maul St.-Cyr's Bavarians on the northern bank of the Dvna. Skirmishing broke out around 8:00am while Wittgenstein deployed.



Nicholas Oudinot

**French Orders:**  
Defend the approaches  
to our bridgehead at  
Polotsk.



Peter Wittgenstein

**Russian Orders:** While  
capturing Spas, quickly  
destroy as much of  
Oudinot's army as  
possible. Avoid heavy  
losses.

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**Victory points:** Refer to the *Age of Eagles* 'Casualty Points Chart' to determine victory points. The Russians gain five points for contesting (or capturing) Polotsk.

**Game length:** Russian 9:00 AM until 6:00 PM (18 turns, but see Scenario Rule #1)

## AFTERMATH

Although he initiated the attack on August 17, Wittgenstein did not desire a grueling, costly battle at Polotsk. Wrede's Bavarians put up a fierce resistance at the hamlet of Spas, with control swinging back and forth throughout the afternoon. Despite his superior numbers, Marshal Oudinot committed just two of his five divisions. By the early evening, Oudinot suffered a serious wound and Spas was in ruins. Wittgenstein pulled back to encamp his army half a mile north of Spas, and General St.-Cyr assumed French command. Determined to earn his own marshal's baton, St.-Cyr spent the night plotting a major attack for August 18.

## SCENARIO RULES

1. The scenario may end before 6:00pm. If either army has lost more than 20% of their total strength, the player may announce at the start of his turn that he elects to quit the field for the day. Losses are calculated by counting the number of stands killed or captured. Loss of a division or corps commander counts as triple (3 stands). This rule represents the eagerness of Oudinot and Wittgenstein to avoid a major, costly engagement. Note: When calculating 20% casualties, the French should not include off-board formations like Verdier, Merle, etc.
2. **THIS SCENARIO HAS THE OPTION FOR A SECOND DAY.** If August 17 ends and *neither side has doubled the victory point total of their opponent*, proceed to August 18. Rules for carrying the battle to August 18 appear after the "Map & Deployment" section at the end.
3. The hamlets of Spas and Prismenitza offer +1 bonuses to melee defenders and -1 bonuses to units under fire. Polotsk offers +2/-2 bonuses, and can garrison twice as many troops.
4. OUDINOT is +0 for initiative, and WITTGENSTEIN suffers a -1 modifier. The Russians begin with initiative. The French should deploy first.

## TERRAIN & WEATHER

The gaming table should be four feet long by four feet wide, laid out according to the accompanying map. Urban areas offer +1 advantages to defending units in melee and a -1 benefit when under fire (but Polotsk is +2/-2). The Dvna River can only be crossed at the bridge. The stream branching from the Dvna counts as rough going. The weather is warm and clear.

## DEPLOYMENT

Units set up according to the accompanying map in whichever formation the commander sees fit. Batteries may begin limbered or unlimbered, and commanders must be deployed within 12 inches of their commands. WITTGENSTEIN may deploy his entire corps on the table, or he may elect to withhold units off-board, to be brought as reinforcements during the battle. Any units held off the table enter at point "A" during any Russian turn.

ST-CYR, the corps commander, may deploy anywhere on the table with his artillery reserve. Army commander OUDINOT deploys within 6" of Polotsk, but most of his corps is south of the Dvna River, inactive for the battle. Only LEGRAND's division and CORBINEAU's brigade are available. CORBINEAU may deploy anywhere within OUDINOT's command radius. Note: Oudinot's heavy artillery reserve is *not* available.

## SCALE

Each infantry stand represents 360 soldiers, each cavalry stand 180 troopers, and artillery stands a battery of 6-12 guns. Ground scale is one inch to 150 yards. This engagement occurred over a **very** small battlefield, so forces will be packed tightly!

## Notes on Sources

The First Battle of Polotsk is noted in many sources but has not received exhausting, thorough study. The OOB for this scenario was taken largely from George Nafziger's *Napoleon's Invasion of Russia* (1988). The French side of the OOB is very accurate, but details of the Russian force below division level are more speculative. The advance guard of Helfreich and Vlastov, for example, were mixed infantry/cavalry/artillery formations. They have been streamlined for this scenario. For a clear narrative of the battle, see Edward Foord, *Napoleon's Russian Campaign of 1812* (1915), pp. 176--182.

# French Order of Battle

## **OIDINOT** Grand Army II & VI Corps

### OIDINOT army ldr

#### ST- CYR VI Corps ldr

Deroy 19th Division ldr  
von Sieben R 6/5/4 Sk line (Bavarian)  
Reglovich R 6/5/4 Sk line (Bavarian)  
Rechberg R 4/3/2 Sk line (Bavarian)  
Light Foot Artillery # 1 & 2

Wrede 20th Division ldr  
Vincenti R 4/3/2 Sk line (Bavarian)  
Beckers R 4/3/2 Sk line (Bavarian)  
Dalwigk R 6/5/3 Sk line (Bavarian)  
Light Foot Artillery #3 & 4

Light Foot Artillery Reserve #5

#### Oudinot (acting army ldr)

Legrand 6th Division ldr  
Albert R 4/3/2 Sk line  
Maison R 5/4/3 Sk line  
Moreau R 5/4/3 Sk line  
Pamplona R 5/4/3 Sk line  
Light Foot Artillery #6

Verdier division ldr  
Vivies R 9/7/5 Sk line  
Pouget R 7/5/4 Sk line  
Light Foot Artillery #7

Merle division ldr  
Candras R 4/3/2 Sk line (Swiss)  
Amey R 7/5/4 Sk line (Swiss)  
Coutard R 4/3/2 Sk line (Swiss)  
Light Foot Artillery #8

Corbineau R 5/4/3 LC chasseurs  
Castex R 6/4/3 LC chasseurs  
Doumerc E 7/5/3 HC cuirassiers

Heavy Foot Artillery Reserve #9 & 10

# Russian Order of Battle

## **WITTGENSTEIN** Russian I Corps

### WITTGENSTEIN corps ldr

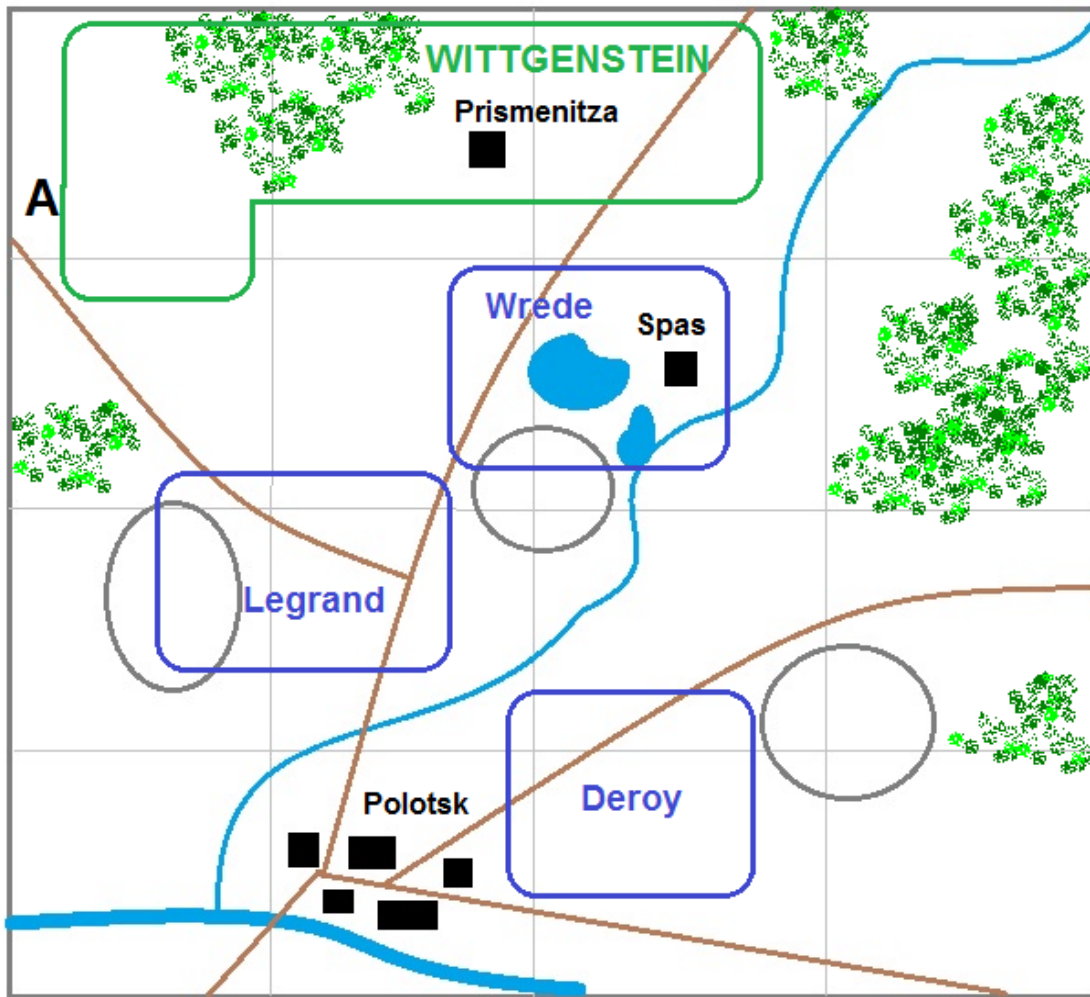
Berg 5th Division ldr  
Kozakovski R 5/4/3 line  
Sibirsky R 6/4/3 line  
Light Foot Artillery # 1 & 2

Kakhoffski 1st Cavalry Div. ldr  
Baumgarten E 6/4/3 Sk grenadier  
Roth R 5/4/3 line  
Balk R 4/3/2 line  
Repnin E 4/3/2 HC cuirassiers  
Light Horse Artillery #5

Sazonov 14th Division ldr  
Sazonov R 5/4/3 line  
Lyalin R 5/4/3 line  
Harpe E 4/3/2 line  
Light Foot Artillery #3 & 4

Helfreich R 5/4/3 Sk jägers  
Vlastov C 5/4/3 cossacks (IR)  
Light Foot Artillery Reserve #6 & 7  
Heavy Foot Artillery Reserve #8

## MAP & DEPLOYMENT



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### **ATTENTION:** Players May Continue to August 18

The scenario carries over to the following day as long as neither side achieved a decisive victory on August 17. Add victory points for the first day of Polotsk, and continue to the second day if the winner did not double the loser's score.

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# The First Battle of Polotsk--DAY TWO

## SETTING

**Date:** 18 August 1812, 4:00 PM

**Location:** 60 miles northwest of Vitebsk, Russia

**Combatants:** French Empire vs. Imperial Russia

**History:** The news of Marshal Oudinot's grave wounds must have been greeted with quiet pleasure by General Gouvion St.-Cyr. A young, ambitious commander, St.-Cyr believed himself long overdue for a marshal's baton. He had chafed under Oudinot's command and spent the night of August 17/18 devising a plan to crush Wittgenstein.

To lure the Russians into a false sense of security, St.-Cyr ordered his men to parade through Polotsk, as if they were retreating from the bridgehead. On the morning of August 18, Wittgenstein observed this ruse, but was not lured into attack. Truth be told, the Russian general was ready to retreat north but opted to linger on the field near his encampment at Prismenitza. As the hours passed, he became certain that the French meant not to attack.

Upon witnessing Wittgenstein's inaction, St.-Cyr decided to launch an attack around 4:00pm. He ordered all available men to march at the double, lining up for battle around Spas.



*Gouvion St.-Cyr*

**French Orders:**  
Destroy the Russians.



*Peter Wittgenstein*

**Russian Orders:**  
Observe the French retreat, occupying Polotsk, if possible. Avoid major engagement or heavy losses.

**Victory points:** Refer to the *Age of Eagles* 'Casualty Points Chart' to determine victory points. The Russians also earn two points for each "fresh" infantry or cavalry brigade they still have at the end of the scenario.

**Game length:** French 4:00 PM until 7:00 PM (6 turns)

## AFTERMATH

A Franco-Bavarian artillery barrage caught the Russians by surprise, but in his haste to launch the attack, St.-Cyr did not wait for all of his infantry to deploy. Thus, the attack began piecemeal, with the Bavarians advancing on Prismenitza unsupported. The Russians fought courageously until additional French divisions entered the fray at dusk. Wittgenstein retreated under the cover of darkness, leaving behind 5,000 casualties and nearly 1,000 prisoners. St.-Cyr claimed victory on the field, but at a cost of 1,200 Bavarians and 3,500 French soldiers. His army, lacking much cavalry, was too exhausted to pursue the Russians. St.-Cyr won Napoleon's praise and finally won his coveted marshal's baton. Wittgenstein, however, would return to face St.-Cyr at Polotsk again two months later. The Second Battle of Polotsk ended with much different results....

## SCENARIO RULES

1. Losses from the previous day carry over to this battle. However, some casualties--minor wounds and stragglers--may be replenished. Each infantry brigade that lost stands should recover a single stand. Cavalry brigades do not recover. Destroyed batteries do not recover.
2. Regardless of how August 17 ended, it is assumed that both sides pulled back to reorganize during the night. Deployment rules for the second day are specified under the "Deployment" section. The winner of yesterday's battle may elect to deploy first or second.
3. The hamlets of Spas and Prismenitza offer +1 bonuses to melee defenders and -1 bonuses to units under fire. Polotsk offers +2/-2 bonuses, and can garrison twice as many troops.
4. Oudinot is not present for the battle. Treat ST.-CYR as corps commander for all five divisions.
5. ST.-CYR is +0 for initiative, and WITTGENSTEIN suffers a -1 modifier. The French begin with initiative.

## TERRAIN & WEATHER

The gaming table should be four feet long by four feet wide, laid out according to the accompanying map. Urban areas offer +1 advantages to defending units in melee and a -1 benefit when under fire (but Polotsk is +2/-2). The Dvna River can only be crossed at the bridge. The stream branching from the Dvna counts as rough going. The weather is warm and clear.

## DEPLOYMENT

Units set up according to the accompanying map in whichever formation the commander sees fit. Batteries may begin limbered or unlimbered, and commanders must be deployed within 12 inches of their commands. WITTGENSTEIN deploys his entire corps on the table.

ST-CYR, the corps commander, may deploy anywhere on the table with his cavalry and artillery reserve. VERDIER and MERLE enter at 4:30pm. One must enter at "A" and the other at "B."

