

FRENCH ARMY 1870-71 FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR 2 REPUBLICAN TROOPS



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OSPREY
MILITARY

MEN-AT-ARMS SERIES

237

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Published in 1991 by
Osprey Publishing Ltd
59 Grosvenor Street, London W1X 9DA
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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Shann, S.

French Army 1870–71, Franco-Prussian War:
Republican
troops. – (Men-at-arms series, 237).
2 : Republican troops
1. France. Armies. Military equipment, history
I. Title II. Series
943.082

ISBN 1-85532-135-1

Filmset in Great Britain
Printed through Bookbuilders Ltd, Hong Kong

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the assistance afforded to them by the staff of Le Musée de l'Armée in Paris, Leeds University, Mr. John Smith, and Miss Julie Trigwell.

Publisher's note:

The first book in this pair, covering the French army in the opening campaigns of 1870, is available as MAA 233 *The French Army 1870–71 Franco-Prussian War(1): Imperial Troops*.

Errata

The authors would like to draw the reader's attention to the following artist's errors in volume 1 of this set, MAA 233: **A1** Collar should be scarlet. **B2** Should have a gilt aiguillette on the right shoulder. **B3** Should have a red aiguillette on the right shoulder. Lance pennant should be white over red. **C1** Tunic front should be piped red. Kepi band should be scarlet. **C2** Tunic front should be piped yellow. **C3** Cuffs should have no buttons. **D3** Sabre knot should be black. **G1** Cuffs should be red and have no buttons. **G3** Cuffs and shoulder patches should be dark blue. Waist belt should be worn under the vest. **H2** Kepi band should be black. **H3** Trousers should be piped yellow.

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FRENCH ARMY 1870-71 (2)

INTRODUCTION

The capitulation of Napoleon and his army at Sedan in September 1870 shook Paris to its foundations. It seemed incredible that a French army of over 100,000 men could have been surrounded and forced to surrender. The effects were felt almost immediately: the Second Empire was swept from power, and a Government of National Defence hastily put in its place. At first it seemed as though a peaceful resolution to the war might yet be found. Providing the Germans were prepared to forego any territorial advantage, the new government felt confident that the French people would be more than happy to see peace restored. Unfortunately sentiments in the German camp were clearly in favour of imposing on the enemy a humiliation which they felt was well deserved. Jules Favre, the French minister responsible for foreign affairs, met with Bismarck in the hope of arranging an armistice as a preliminary to peace. The meeting was not a success; unable to agree terms, Favre returned to Paris empty-handed.

In truth, however, the French were still far from convinced that the war was lost. Sedan was widely seen as the defeat of an unpopular Imperial regime and its private army, rather than that of France itself. Considerable resources still remained untapped, and many felt that as long as the Germans remained intransigent the fight could and should be continued. To replace the professional army a 'war of the people' was called for. The reaction was mixed. Many, particularly in central and southern France, were profoundly indifferent to the war, which they regarded as Paris' problem. The clash between the officials of the old and new regimes was also damaging. Nevertheless, thanks largely due to the intervention of Gambetta, the Interior minister, the massive problems facing the country were tackled—if not ultimately overcome—and the war kept going for a further five months.

THE REGULAR ARMY

Of the Imperial army available in August 1870 (see Part 1, MAA 232) only fragments remained. The capitulation of Sedan and the isolation of Metz had deprived France of 90% of her field army, although Bazaine's beleaguered men still tied down some 200,000 German troops and would continue to do so until the end of October. Nevertheless, to all intents and purposes the regular army had been effectively destroyed.

By the fall of the Empire only seven line infantry regiments were available, and one of those, the 87th, was itself besieged in Strasbourg. Of the remaining six, four (the 16th, 38th, 39th and 92nd) were recalled from Algeria, and two more (the 35th and 42nd) from Italy. The situation with regard to cavalry was little better. Five regiments (the 6th and 8th Hussars, the 1st and 9th Chasseurs and the 6th Dragoons) had taken no part in the campaign. Another, the 9th Cuirassiers, had been withdrawn to re-fit after its ordeal at Froeschwiller. A significant proportion of 1st Corps' cavalry division had also succeeded in slipping through the German encirclement at Sedan: Septeuil's brigade (3rd Hussars and 11th Chasseurs), a squadron of the 6th Lancers, two squadrons of the 10th Dragoons and elements of the 2nd Lancers. As for the rest of the army, only isolated groups succeeded in making their escape. The artillery was almost completely lost.

There were, however, considerable reserves of manpower still available to the new government in the numerous depots scattered around the country. By using these and calling up further reserves a substantial force of regular troops was created. On the whole these men were not of the same calibre as those who had taken part in the initial campaign, but their mobilisation did nevertheless represent no small achievement on the part of the authorities.

Infantry

The creation of provisional *régiments de marche* had begun under the Empire. Four of them had even been attached to the Army of Châlons and had fought at Sedan. Ten others had been embodied into Gen. Vinoy's 13th Corps, which had succeeded in escaping the Sedan debacle and returned to Paris. A further twelve formed the 14th Corps. These units were created by combining the 4th (depot) Battalions of three different regiments. Because of this they lacked the solidity and esprit de corps of regular regiments, but were at least homogeneous at battalion level. Later in the war, however, units were formed that included companies from many different regiments, which posed great difficulties due to the fact that each

one was administered separately. (E.g., the 36th *de marche* (later the 136th of the line) was formed on 28 September from the companies of no less than 16 different regiments.) Many generals proposed that such units should be made permanent for the duration of the war in order to remedy this situation, as well as to improve morale. The politicians tended to oppose this on the grounds that such units would be harder to disband after the war. Nevertheless, by a decree of 28 October, *régiments de marche* in Paris were recognised as single entities, and adopted the title *régiments de ligne*, being numbered sequentially after the original 100 line regiments of the old army. The provincial armies seemingly retained the nomenclature '*de marche*'.

CHRONOLOGY

19 September Paris invested.

28 September Strasbourg capitulates.

8 October Gambetta escapes from Paris by balloon.

18 October Battle of Châteaudun: A strong force of francs-tireurs was expelled from the town after a prolonged resistance. The main significance of this action lay in demonstrating what these irregulars, so despised by the Germans, were capable of when properly disciplined and led.

27 October Metz capitulates.

9 November Battle of Coulmiers. The first undisputed French victory of the war, where the Bavarian I Corps was defeated by the 15th and 16th Corps of the Army of the Loire. The battle resulted in the French re-occupation of Orleans.

30 November–2 December Great sortie at Champigny. This represented the first serious French attempt to break the German encirclement. After initial success it proved impossible to break through the strong defences.

2 December Battle of Loigny: elements of 15th, 16th and 17th Corps of The Army of the Loire under Chanzy were defeated by a Prusso-Bavarian force under the Duke of Mecklenburg. This defeat resulted in the fall of Orleans and, in conjunction with the appalling weather, the demoralisation of the French army.

8 December Battle of Beaugency: after a sustained resistance Chanzy was obliged to retreat under growing German pressure.

23 December Battle of La Hallue: the French

Army of the North under General Faidherbe gained a hard-fought draw against the Prussian I and VIII Corps under Manteuffel.

2–3 January Battle of Bapaume: Faidherbe's army was again engaged with elements of the Prussian VIII Corps in an indecisive action from which both sides eventually withdrew.

6–12 January Combats around Le Mans: a series of engagements that finally ruined the Army of the Loire with over 25,000 casualties and many more deserters. It played no further part in the war.

9 January Battle of Villersexel. An indecisive action between Bourbaki's 2nd Army of the Loire and General von Werder's XIV Corps.

15–17 January Battle around Belfort: Bourbaki's attempt to relieve Belfort was decisively thwarted by General Werder, despite some local successes.

18 January King William of Prussia proclaimed Kaiser of Germany at Versailles.

19 January Battle of St Quentin: Faidherbe's troops were finally dispersed by the better trained Germans under von Goeben. Final sortie from Paris defeated.

23 January Armistice negotiations begin.

28 January Capitulation of Paris.

1 February Bourbaki's army retreats into Switzerland and is interned.

26 February Peace treaty signed, France loses Alsace and part of Lorraine.



In total 27 provisional regiments took part in the siege of Paris. Of these the 28th *de marche* (later the 128th *de ligne*) was composed of the 23 depot companies of the Grenadiers, Voltigeurs and Chasseurs of the ex-Imperial Guard. This unit was prominent at the action of Le Bourget, where it was involved in its defence against an attack by the Prussian Guard. Seven companies under Cdt. Brasseur fought from house to house until overwhelmed. Between the fall of the Empire and the end of the war a further 56 provisional regiments were also formed in the provinces.

A large number of Chasseur units were also created. Three battalions (the 21st–23rd) were organised in Paris, again following on from the first 20 which had existed under the Empire. The provincial armies also formed a further 30 battalions, of between four and eight companies each.

Another source of reasonably disciplined troops were the various quasi-military bodies already in existence. Steps had been taken to organise these groups before the fall of the Empire, with some success. On 11 August a regiment of three battalions

*A group of Chasseurs
d'Afrique captured at
Sedan guarded by a soldier*

*of the Baden contingent.
(Private Collection)*

of Gendarmerie was created in Paris, totalling 48 officers and 1,600 men. There was also the *Garde de Paris* (known from 10 September as the *Garde Républicaine*), of two battalions of eight companies (56 officers and 1,930 men); and a regiment of foresters (two battalions of seven companies numbering 44 officers and 1,048 men). Much to the embarrassment of the authorities there were even three companies of foresters which had been created by the ex-Empress from gamekeepers on the Imperial estates. Customs officials were formed into six battalions (78 officers and 2,539 men), and there was a provisional regiment of policemen (six battalions totalling over 5,500 officers and men). There was also a regiment of firemen, 1,294 strong, though these were not intended for front-line action.

In the provinces a provisional regiment of Gendarmes was also created (two battalions of four companies). On 20 December the *Gendarmerie Sédentaire* was mobilised to help deal with the soaring

desertion rates. There were also a large number of customs units in the provinces—15 battalions had been formed by the fall of the Empire, whilst another three were created by the new government, as well as 11 companies of foresters. Of this huge force only a fraction could be regarded as even adequate soldiers (Gen. Ducrot reckoned that no more than a third of those in Paris were of any real use). Nevertheless certain units performed very creditably. The 35th and 42nd Regiments did very well during the siege of Paris; the former lost 40 officers and 1,200 men, whilst the latter had casualties of 43 officers and 1,400 men. They did particularly well during the great sortie at Champigny (30 November–2 December). The 28th also did well, despite its mauling at Le Bourget.

Cavalry

Although the Republican phase of the war was to see no dramatic cavalry actions such as those at Froeschwiller, Mars la Tour and Sedan, the need for cavalry was felt very strongly. The few regiments which survived the first campaign were totally inadequate for the requirements of the new armies being raised. Consequently a similar system of provisional regiments was used in the cavalry, making use of the numerous depot squadrons still available. In Paris,

the need for cavalry was obviously not so great, the tactical situation being so unsuitable for its use.

Such cavalry as existed was formed into two divisions, one each for the 2nd and 3rd Armies. That of the 2nd Army consisted of the 1st and 2nd Provisional Dragoons (later the 13th and 14th Regiments), the 1st and 9th Chasseurs, the Spahi squadron and the Gendarmerie à Cheval, the latter consisting of six squadrons (46 officers and 720 men). The division attached to the 3rd Army had the 1st Provisional (later 9th) Lancers, the 2nd Provisional (later 12th) Cuirassiers, formed from the depot squadrons of the Cent-Gardes, Guard Cuirassier, Guard Carabinier and 1st Cuirassier Regiments; and a mixed regiment composed of the depot squadrons of the Guard Dragoons, Lancers, Chasseurs and Guides. A second regiment of Gendarmerie was added later, formed around the old Gendarmes d'Elite. There was also a regiment of the *Garde Républicaine* (ex *Garde de Paris*) of four squadrons (23 officers and 556 men).

In the provinces, however, a large number of provisional regiments were created. A decree of 26 August had ordered all medium and heavy regiments

*A group of men from
Bourbaki's army during
their internment in*

*Switzerland. (Private
Collection)*



to raise a 6th Squadron, which when added to those already in existence, plus further intakes of reservists and escapees, allowed the Republic to raise a further 40 regiments: nine of Cuirassiers, ten of Dragoons (including the 7th and 11th Regiments which were re-formed in their entirety), five of Lancers, two of Chasseurs, four of Hussars and ten mixed regiments. All the provisional regiments had four squadrons (five for the re-formed 7th and 11th Dragoons). The mixed regiments were composed of squadrons of different types, although the majority were light cavalry. A decree of 31 October also created two provisional regiments of mounted Gendarmes each of four squadrons.

Artillery

The almost total destruction of the artillery arm was to be felt most severely in the lack of experienced crews rather than in material. French industry was to prove quite capable of replacing all the guns lost; according to one estimate, some 1,500 were provided for the provincial armies and a further 1,100 for the defence of Paris, in addition to the thousands of old smoothbores available. Thanks to the remount service there were also plenty of horses, and battery equipment was also available in considerable quantity. There were, however, only some 450 artillery officers available, although this number was gradually increased by promotions, by recalling retired men and by employing naval officers. The same shortages did not apply to other ranks, although many had received little training. Due to the rapid advances made by the enemy it also proved necessary to displace some of the depots, the towns of Grenoble, Rennes, Toulouse and Valence housing much of the equipment.

The assembling of batteries ready to take the field did prove to be a difficult problem despite the abundance of equipment available. Most depot units were composed of foot artillery, which had to be converted into *batteries montées*. Others became *batteries mixtes*, the guns being manned by artillerymen but drawn by the Train. The proportion of guns to men never reached the levels attained under the Empire but the overall numbers were still considerable. According to one source, between 15 July 1870 and 1 March 1871, a total of 282 batteries were created along with 89 companies of Train.



Sergeant of a régiment de marche—winter 1870–71. Note the turned down collar and the lack of epaulettes typical of

provisional regiments. His rank is denoted by the single gold cuff stripe on his lower sleeve. (Private Collection)

Engineers

The replacing of trained engineers proved to be a more difficult task. In the provinces only 32 companies were mobilised, of which 29 saw service in the field. In Paris there were initially only six companies with a further four being created later. Despite all these efforts there were only enough for half the normal allotment under the Empire.

L'ARMÉE D'AFRIQUE

The Zouaves, Turcos and Chasseurs embodied in the Imperial field army were practically destroyed at Froeschwiller and Sedan. Nevertheless, those that did succeed in escaping, along with others not previously engaged, made a considerable contribution to the new armies raised by the Republican government.

Zouaves

Elements of the 3rd Regiment succeeded in evading the German encirclement at Sedan; 17 officers and 423 men along with their eagle eventually making their escape. These troops finally made their way to Paris where they formed the nucleus of the 4th Zouave Regiment, along with the two depot companies of the ex-Guard Zouaves. They were joined by scattered refugees from Sedan, recalled reservists and volunteers. The regiment, some 2,000 strong, served throughout the siege of Paris.

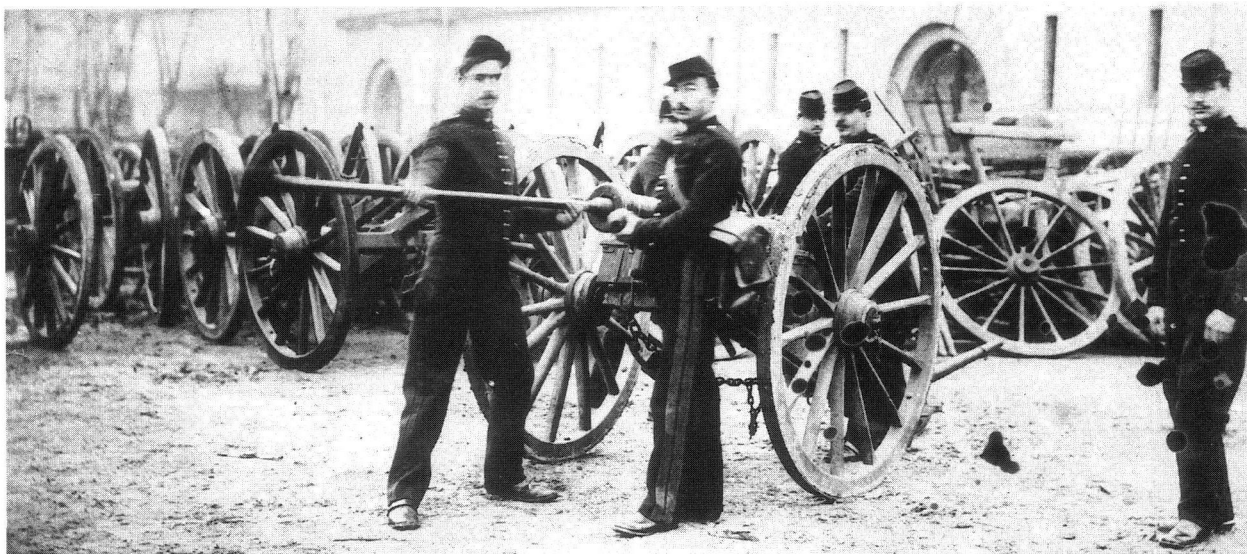
There were also considerable numbers of depot troops in Algeria. Each of the three regiments could field ten companies (three per battalion and a single *compagnie hors rang*). These formed the basis of three new regiments which were created at Antibes (1st), Avignon (2nd) and Montpellier (3rd). The depot

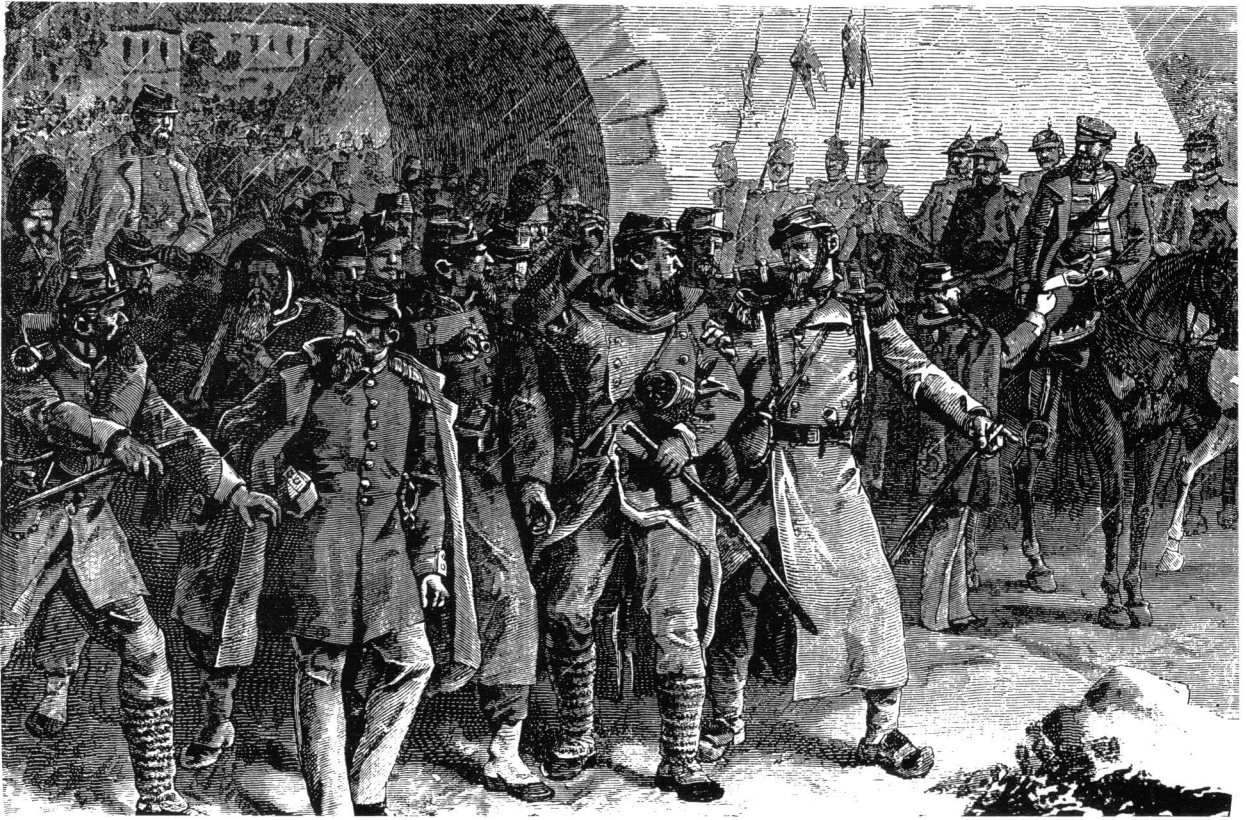
troops were supplemented by volunteers of at least one year's service. Such was the popularity of the Zouaves that all three regiments were soon well up to strength. A fourth regiment was later created from elements of the first three (which should not be confused with the 4th Zouaves in Paris). As under the Empire, they were heavily engaged, seeing considerable action in the ranks of the Army of the Loire. The 1st and 2nd Regiments formed part of 15th Corps, the best formation in the provincial armies, whilst the 3rd Regiment helped bolster the hastily raised and ill-equipped 20th Corps. The new 4th Regiment was attached to 18th Corps.

Turcos

On 3 September, detachments of Turcos en route for the front were detained in Paris as news began to filter through of the surrender at Sedan. Along with escapees and convalescents from Wissembourg and Froeschwiller they were despatched to the Army of the Loire. On 2 October they were formed into a provisional regiment and attached to 15th Corps. There were also considerable numbers of men still in Algeria (the 4th Battalions of each of the three regiments plus the depot companies). From these a second provisional regiment was formed, although only one battalion was actually sent to France.

*Gunners of the Paris
garrison during the siege.
(Private Collection)*





Chasseurs d'Afrique

Due to the fact that the Chasseurs only fielded four squadrons per regiment in August, a total of eight squadrons were still available after the fall of the Empire. Along with escapees and reservists it was possible to form three provisional regiments, two of which served in France.

The Foreign Legion

By 1870 the Foreign Legion consisted of a single regiment of four battalions each of eight companies. According to French law the regiment was not to be used within the borders of metropolitan France; however, such was the shortage of trained soldiers that the Legion was ordered to provide a contingent, from which were excluded all men of German descent. On 11 October two provisional battalions (60 officers and 1,457 men) disembarked at Toulon. By a decree of 22 August a 5th Battalion was created at Tours, made up of foreigners who wished to fight for France. On 26 October it joined the regular battalions, forming a provisional regiment some 2,700 strong. A 6th Battalion was also planned, but

The capitulation of Metz. Bazaine's surrender released 200,000 German troops for operations against the provincial armies trying to relieve Paris. Note the Imperial

Guard infantrymen in bearskin and bonnet de police and the Guard Zouave in the short, hooded cloak (caban à capuchon).

was only half formed by the time of the armistice. The Legion fought in the first French victory of the war at Coulmiers, and later covered the retreat of its division after the action of Cercottes (3 December), during which it suffered heavy losses. Reinforced with inexperienced recruits, it fought in the East, where it was again badly hit. Its short service in France was completed putting down the Commune in Paris.

Infanterie Légère d'Afrique

Three battalions of 'Zéphyrs' were created in 1832 from discipline companies and other 'dubious characters'. They enjoyed a reputation for bad behaviour and were the only units in *l'Armée d'Afrique* to be subject to conscription, being ordinary soldiers who had been posted to Algeria as a disciplinary measure.



The capitulation of Strasbourg. Offered the honours of war after a determined defence, many chose to destroy their weapons rather than surrender them.

As with the Foreign Legion they were called upon due to the dire shortage of trained troops, and proved to be excellent fighters. On 17 October each battalion was ordered to mobilise two companies each of 250 men, which made their own way to France. On 5 December they were united into a single battalion with the Army of the Loire. On the 13th it was decided to split the unit in two due to its size, the provisional regiment thereby formed serving in 18th Corps.

Spahis

Originally part of the Chasseurs d'Afrique, they were withdrawn in 1841 to form a separate corps. By 1845 there were three regiments, one from each province. They served in the Crimea as escort to Marshal Saint Arnaud, commander of the French expeditionary force, as well as in Syria and China. In 1870 a squadron took part in the defence of Paris, whilst a provisional regiment of three squadrons (one per province) formed part of the Army of the Loire.

LA GARDE NATIONALE MOBILE

Conceived as a second-line reserve to the regular army, this was to consist of men of military age who had, one way or another, avoided conscription. Its role was to free the regular troops from the more mundane duties of garrisoning fortresses and maintaining internal order. In peacetime it had no other function than training, and a special law was required to mobilise it in time of war. Its use was further restricted to France's own borders. Length of service was set at five years, and it was hoped to absorb 116,000 men per year (a figure based on the average of previous annual 'classes' of conscription). During the mobilisation of the *Garde Mobile* in 1870 the classes of 1865-69 were liable to serve, reinforced later by that of 1870, by volunteers and previously excused single men and childless widowers of the classes of 1865-66.

Any hopes that the *Garde Mobile* might fulfil the same role as the Prussian Landwehr were effectively dashed by the limitations placed upon it. The legislature was so concerned by what it saw as the militarisation of the country that it refused to allow the new force to train for more than 15 days a year; furthermore this training was to take place a day at a time, and could not include an overnight stay. Consequently little time remained after travelling to and from home, particularly in rural areas, for any useful instruction. Training days were ideally set for a Sunday, so as not to interfere with the men's work (the *Garde Mobile* was not paid at this time). Even this ridiculously inadequate total was often not met: for example in 1869 the 4th Battalion of the Seine only had seven training sessions of three hours each, instead of 15 of one day. Nor did the regular army take much interest in its new auxiliary force, regarding it as a distraction and a waste of money. All in all the Parisian *Mobiles* did better than their provincial counterparts, enjoying as they did the patronage of the Emperor, who ensured that they were at least allowed to practise with the Chassepot. In general,



Sous-lieutenant of Spahis.
Note the indication of rank
in the single strand
Hungarian knot. Note also

the quatrefoil design on
the képi crown. (Private
Collection)

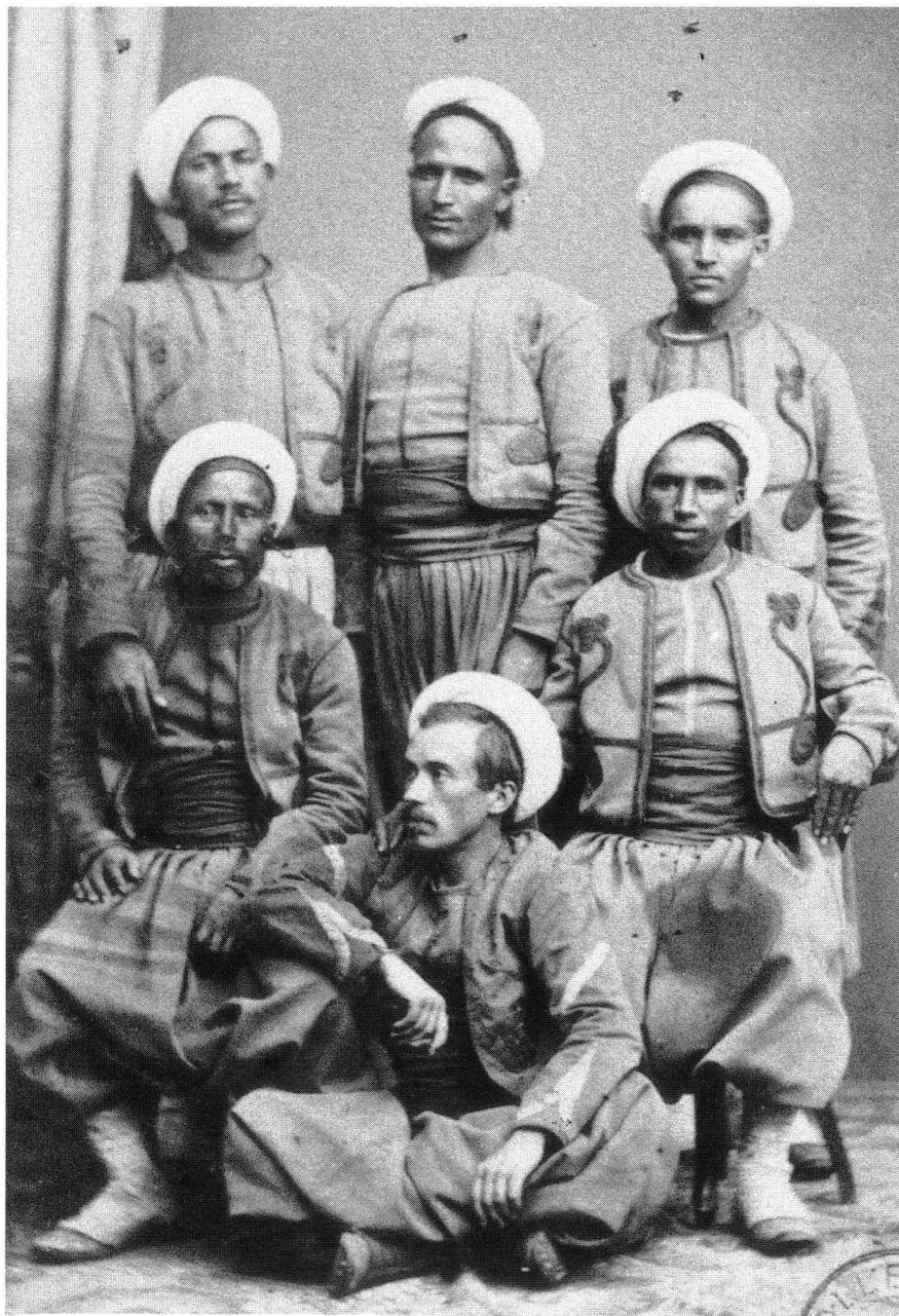
however, the level of training was very low.

The officers of this new force were taken from a variety of sources. Battalion and company commanders were drawn from retired regular officers or those who had served 30 years and were willing to continue that service in the *Garde Mobile*. Those who had served for 27 years could retain their 30-year pension rights by agreeing to complete their term in the *Mobiles*. Officers who had resigned their commissions could also serve, as could any civilian whose aptitude was regarded as being sufficiently high. A survey carried out in February 1869 of the first 113 battalion

commanders appointed showed that 29 were retired officers, 15 had left the army in order to serve, 47 were officers who had previously resigned their commissions, one was an ex-NCO and the remaining 21 were civilians. Of the first 149 company commanders, the numbers were 43, 10, 37, 30 and 29. More junior officers were usually civilians from the educated classes, who had been called upon to serve in the

Garde Mobile. The age limits were set at 62 years for senior and 60 years for junior officers.

All officers were nominated by the military, although the advice of the local prefects was usually considered, particularly with regard to civilian appointments. Naturally all candidates were screened in order to exclude any whose loyalty to the Empire was in doubt. Nominations once decided were signed



Turcos captured at Wissembourg and Froeschwiller. Note the French sergeant (front centre) with a rank stripe on cuffs and a long service chevron on his upper sleeve. (Private Collection)

by the Emperor in person. After Sedan many of these men refused to serve the new government. Consequently it was decided that all officers should be elected by their men. A decree of 17 September instructed all battalions collected in Paris to carry this out on the 19th. On the 18th this measure was extended to the provinces. The vote in Paris coincided with the first serious fighting at Châtillon, and witnessed the ludicrous spectacle of many units carrying out a ballot rather than fighting the enemy. It was hoped that the elections would weed out those officers who were still attached to the old regime as well as those who were inefficient. In the event the results were unsatisfactory. Many competent but strict officers lost their posts, whilst popular but mediocre men were elected; some ballots were decided by bribery. In the provinces it was left to the discretion of the prefects whether ballots were held or not; in most departments they were not. The failure of this system was finally acknowledged on 18 December when it was revoked.

The organisation of the *Garde Mobile* was on a regional basis; each department was required to furnish a number of units based on its population. As far as possible a battalion, which was initially set at eight companies each of no more than 250 men, would draw its recruits from a particular *arrondissement* and each company from a *canton*. They were numbered according to the alphabetical order of their recruitment area. A regiment's number was that of its department (Paris was the 75th), though this system was later abandoned.

The law mobilising the *Garde Mobile* was published on 17 July, and a decree of the following day ordered the formation of one regiment of three battalions per department. The maximum strength of each battalion was now set at 1,200 men, still divided between eight companies. From this time the *Garde Mobile* came under the control of the army and military law.

On 18 July, the 18 battalions of the Seine were collected into six regiments and sent from Paris to Châlons, where a reserve army was being collected. It was here that the famous incident occurred that was to provide a foretaste of the rampant indiscipline of

the Parisian *Mobiles*. Marshal Canrobert, passing in revue before the 4th Battalion, was greeted with cries of 'To Paris'. Canrobert, affecting to misunderstand, replied: 'Don't you mean Berlin? Doubtless I am a little deaf.' They did not; and it was decided to divide them amongst the eastern fortresses. However, the Emperor was prevailed upon to return them to the capital; once there they continued to cause trouble,



Sous-lieutenant of
Chasseurs d'Afrique
photographed on 12

February 1871, serving in
the Army of the Loire.
(Private Collection)

disobeying their officers and absenting themselves without leave. During the Commune ten battalions passed over more or less intact to the forces of insurrection.

During the course of the war large numbers of *Mobiles* were raised. On 4 September, the date of the proclamation of the Republic, there were 321 battalions on paper. Between that date and the 17th, 75 provincial battalions (a total of 1,800 officers and 93,500 men) were sent to the capital to join the 18 battalions of the Seine already there. A further 25 battalions were in towns already besieged by the Germans. The remaining 203 battalions were assigned to the various field armies. Of these 111 were formed into 38 regiments (35 of three battalions and three of two battalions). Of the other 92 battalions, 70, along with a further 44 newly raised, were subsequently formed into 42 extra regiments (31 of three battalions, 10 of two battalions and one single battalion regiment). The remaining 22 battalions were kept as independent units. Before the end of the war a further 32 battalions were added, making a grand total in the provincial armies alone of 279 battalions. Of these, 43 battalions were either sent to Algeria or used to garrison fortresses in the interior. Most battalions were organised with eight companies each, of which one formed the depot. These were sometimes united into provisional battalions.

The *Garde Mobile* also included a large contingent



of artillery. Batteries were raised only in the departments that had regular artillery units, fortresses, forts, naval batteries or particular places where training could be carried out due to the availability of the necessary facilities. By 4 September 125 batteries were available, although most were short of equipment. Of these six belonged to the *Garde Mobile de la Seine*. Fifty-six batteries were in towns under siege (including 15 in Paris). To the remaining 69, a further 31 were added before the end of the war, including 12 of mitrailleuses. Of this impressive total only 33 actually served with the field armies. All *Garde Mobile* batteries were initially *batteries à pied*, intended for essentially static duties. During the war a total of 38, including all 12 of mitrailleuses were transformed into *batteries montées*.

A regiment of light cavalry was also created by a decree of 4 December 1870. The *Garde Mobile à Cheval* was composed of good horsemen from the *Garde Nationale Mobilisée* and designed for independent action against the German lines of communication. Armed with Chassepot rifles and sabres, it was apparently a good unit. The first four squadrons were formed at Périgueux on 15 December, to be joined by a fifth squadron on the 24th and a sixth on 5 January 1871. Despite their intended role the regiment was attached to the cavalry division of the embryonic 25th Corps, and saw no action before the end of the war.

As with the cavalry, no engineers had been planned for the *Garde Mobile*, yet three companies were subsequently formed. To these was added the 3rd Battalion of the *Garde Mobile de la Loire*, which took the name '*Bataillon du Génie de la Garde Mobile*'.

In action the *Mobiles* had a chequered history, although they were far from being the complete rabble that is often suggested. At Coulmiers the *Mobiles* of the 22nd (Dordogne) Regiment distinguished themselves in the taking of the village, stabilising the situation following a successful Bavarian counter-attack. On the whole, however, their lack of training inevitably placed them at a disadvantage against their more professional opponents. Following the armistice the *Garde Mobile* was stood down, and finally disbanded in 1872, to be replaced by the new *Armée Territoriale*.

Spahis on escort duty.

LA GARDE NATIONALE

Originally created during the French Revolution to maintain internal order, this middle-class militia had gradually merged into the regular army, fighting well during the campaigns of 1813–14. As a political force it was to prove unacceptable to Napoleon III, who abolished it following his coup; but this decision did allow for the possibility of re-forming it in areas where its presence was deemed necessary for the maintenance of law and order. In the event Napoleon made no real use of this clause, although in the capital it was at least retained in embryo. To all intents and purposes the *Garde Nationale* was not called upon until 1870, when a law was passed on 12 August re-establishing it in every department in the country. This work intensified after the fall of the Empire, when Gambetta took on the task of preparing it for the important role it was to play.

On 15 September a circular was sent to all prefects instructing them to organise the *Garde Nationale* in their respective areas. This was realised in two stages: firstly, a decree of 29 September ordered them to create companies from volunteers who did not already belong to the regular army or the *Garde Mobile* and those between the ages of 21 and 40 who were either single or widowers without children. The second stage, which marked the transition to all-out war, was a decree of 2 November which called up everyone, regardless of family considerations.

Technically the *Garde Nationale* was divided into two parts: *la Garde Nationale Mobilisée* and *la Garde Nationale Sédentaire*, the latter restricted to local defence and playing a very limited part in the war, whilst the former was intended to operate in the field. A further decree of 25 November set up 11 training camps (Saint-Omer, Cherbourg, Conlie, Nevers, La Rochelle, Bordeaux, Clermont-Ferrand, Toulouse, Montpellier, Marseilles and Lyons) to which all *Mobilisés* were to be sent as soon as they were organised. The men were collected into battalions of between six and ten companies which were then generally formed into legions or regiments of three battalions each. As far as possible, units from the



Colonel of Mobiles,
carrying a First Empire

cavalry sabre. (Private
Collection)

same department were kept together, although three mixed legions did exist, containing battalions from different departments.

The mobilisation of these troops was fraught with problems. Most of the men called up had never served before and were therefore completely untrained and undisciplined. All equipment, clothing and weapons were provided at the expense of each department until the troops were transferred to the control of the military at the training camps. Such equipment was of very variable quality. There was



Mobile de la Seine wearing the 1867 pattern line infantry greatcoat, received in October 1870.

He is also wearing the 1868 pattern képi, without the pompon (Private Collection)

also a critical shortage of officers. Nevertheless huge numbers of men were mobilised—estimated by one source at 578,900—although they only began to enter the ranks of the field army in any number in the last month of the war. By 1 March there were a total of 754 battalions in the provinces alone, formed in 223 legions, 16 regiments and 11 independent battalions. By the end of the war 21 of these battalions were in garrisons under siege, seven were sent to Algeria, 354 were either in their departments or in training camps and 367 actually in the field. In action they were of little use. At the battle of Le Mans (11 January) 22 battalions of Breton *Gardes Nationales*, pathetically armed and equipped, disintegrated after minimal resistance.

On 3 November a decree was issued to all departments instructing them to supply one fully equipped battery per 100,000 head of population within two months and the first battery within 30 days. Paid for by the department concerned and organised by the prefects, they were to be crewed by ex-gunners now serving in the *Garde Nationale* and volunteers, plus any personnel with technical knowledge. It was initially hoped that 359 batteries would be forthcoming, though this number was later reduced to 250. In the event only a small proportion actually came into being—57 by 19 February 1871.

La Garde Nationale de Paris

The *Garde Nationale de la Seine* was to play not only a military, but also a political role in the siege of Paris, culminating in the bloody chaos and division of the Commune. At the outbreak of war there were already 51 battalions in the capital to which a further nine were added following the law of 12 August. It was hoped to raise each of these to a strength of 1,500 men divided into eight companies. The officers of the nine new battalions were elected by their men from the outset; those of the remaining 51 resigned and submitted themselves to the same procedure. This decision was to further weaken the already doubtful military viability of the *Garde Nationale*.

A circular from the Ministry of the Interior, dated 6 September, authorised the creation of 60 new battalions, also of 1,500 men. Recruitment was to be by *arrondissement*, with each of the capital's 22 *arrondissements* furnishing a number of battalions proportional to its population. As the work progressed,



Group of Mobilisés of the Garde Nationale. (Private Collection)

neither the number nor strength of the battalions was adhered to. Instead of 120 battalions a total of 260 were raised, varying in strength from 350 men (229th) to 2,600 men (116th). Unfortunately the lack of adequate weapons forced the authorities to curtail recruitment, and from 12 September no new battalions were raised; indeed, such was the shortage that 22 battalions for whom no weapons could be found were transformed into auxiliary engineer units. Those weapons that were available were of widely differing origins, some units having five or six different types. This lack of uniformity was to raise more problems than simply one of ammunition supply: according to Gen. Ducrot the *Gardes* were contemptuous of any rifle except the Chassepot, which they accused the authorities of hiding. The good general also claimed, though with what justification it is difficult to say, that the most politically dubious battalions were also the best armed.

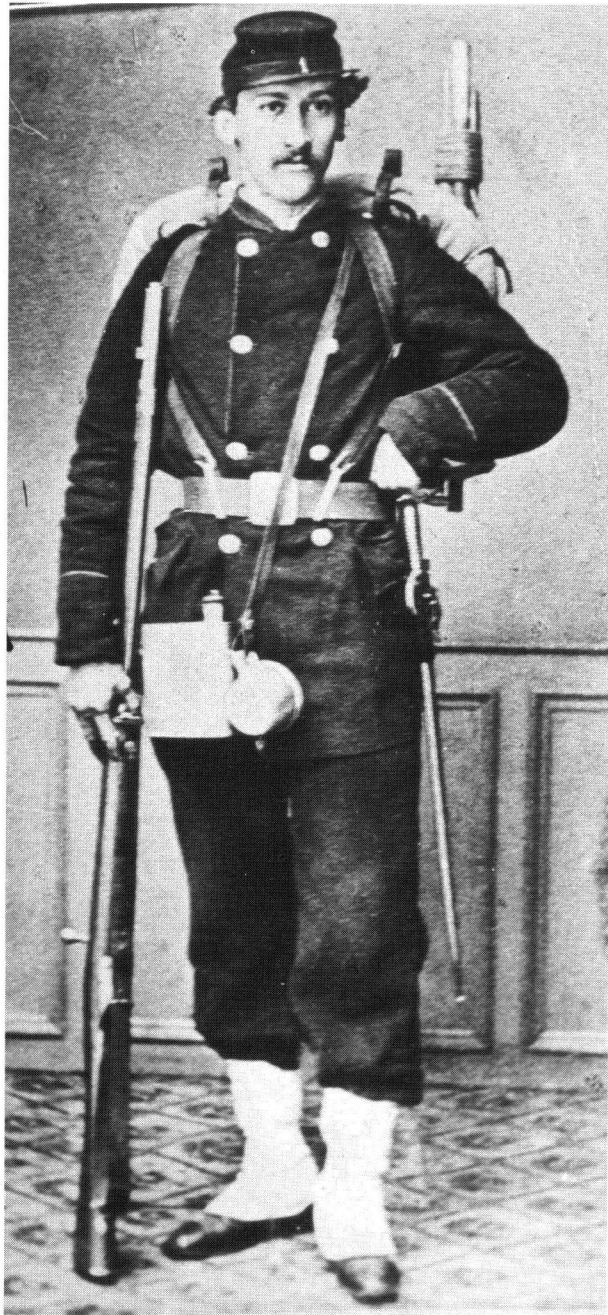
Although many had little or no confidence in the *Garde Nationale*, the government nonetheless felt obliged to at least attempt to create some usable elements from the great mass of men at its disposal. A decree of 16 October ordered the creation in each battalion of a company of volunteers armed with modern weapons. The aim was to provide a four-company battalion of 600 men which could be attached to the regular troops on the basis of one per

division. Of the 344,000 men available only 6,500 volunteered, and the scheme was dropped. On 8 November a new decree was issued which divided each battalion into two parts: the first four companies, designated *compagnies de guerre*, were to be drawn from men chosen according to a number of categories. Each of these groupings followed on successively from the other and one could not be used until the previous one was exhausted. These categories were: volunteers of any age, single men or widowers without children from 20–35 years of age, single men or widowers without children from 35–45 years of age, married men or widowers with children from 20–35 years of age, and married men or widowers with children from 35–45 years of age. Those not employed in the active part of the battalion were kept in the remaining four companies, whose role was to keep the *compagnies de guerre* up to strength. These were also given priority with regard to weapons, although men in the reserve (*sédentaire*) companies were often reluctant to exchange their more modern rifles for older ones.

Eventually the *Garde Nationale de Paris* was able to field a total of 59 regiments, each of four battalions, which on paper amounted to some 104,000 men plus a further 227,000 in reserve. Together they formed the 1st Army. In reality these units were at best a doubtful asset. At the end of November a few regiments took their place in the front line, but the results were not encouraging. One battalion abandoned its post en masse and refused to return; whilst

another was reported as having half its men (including the commanding officer) drunk, and had to be relieved.

The *Garde Nationale de Paris* also had a cavalry legion of four squadrons, which generally served as couriers and guides. On 11 January it was disbanded when its horses were requisitioned. A decree of 19 September also ordered the formation of a force of artillery; this eventually rose to a strength of nine



batteries and was deployed in various bastions around the capital. In addition to the 22 battalions of auxiliary engineers already mentioned, there was a further body raised on 24 August, whose role was to construct defence works should a siege become—as it appeared it might—a reality. On 7 November this body took the title *Légion du Génie Auxiliaire de la Garde Nationale*. The Legion was divided into two battalions, each of eight *compagnies de guerre* of 100 men. They were constantly employed in a variety of tasks—digging trenches, clearing obstacles and constructing fortifications. During the course of the siege over one-third of their number either fell sick or became casualties.

During the siege the mass of the *Garde Nationale* was employed in a static role, either in the defensive perimeter or at strategic points inside the actual city. This is reflected in the losses that it suffered, which amounted to the unimpressive total of 1,800 men, little more than those of each of the two regular regiments of the celebrated '*Brigade des Drapeaux*'. The majority of these were sustained at the Battle of Buzenval (19 January) when against the better judgement of many, it was decided to let them fight. In the resulting engagement they proved to be a liability, lacking any real semblance of cohesion or discipline; their retreat, when it came, was a rout which affected the steadier troops around them. During the Commune they showed considerably more spirit fighting against their own countrymen than they had against the Germans. As a consequence, on 25 August 1871, the *Garde Nationale* was, with the exception of its contingent of firemen, disbanded.

NAVAL FORCES

The French navy played an important role in the war in 1870, contributing large numbers of men and considerable quantities of equipment. In August 1870 it could boast some 402 vessels carrying 2,109 guns and 73,000 men, although a number of ships were kept in reserve due to budgetary constraints.

*Infantryman, Garde Nationale Mobilisée.
(Private Collection)*

At the outbreak of war the French government formed a naval squadron at Cherbourg for the purposes of attacking Prussia's fleet and blockading its coastline. It also hoped to send an expeditionary force of 40,000 men (subsequently reduced to 15,000) to invade Prussia itself. In the event the invasion failed to materialise, and the only naval clash was an indecisive skirmish off Cuba between the French ship *Le Bouvet* and the Prussian vessel *Meteor*. The double disaster of Spicheren-Froeschwiller on 6 August made any incursion into German territory out of the question. Consequently on 7 August the 'Blue Division' of marines, under General de Vassoigne, was directed to Châlons, where in due course MacMahon's defeated army began to re-form. Three weeks later it fought at Sedan, distinguishing itself in the defence of Bazeilles.

Following the downfall of the Empire the Government of National Defence began the mammoth task of replacing the armies destroyed at Sedan and blockaded in Metz. The vast majority of troops available were either ill-trained reservists, *Mobiles* or National Guards, desperately in need of the support of regular soldiers. Consequently it was decided to call on the navy to help provide this badly needed nucleus.

Plans for moving them to the capital had been put in hand as early as 7 August. Between then and 19 September, when the encirclement of Paris was completed, some 8,300 sailors and over 5,000 marines had arrived. The sailors formed a total of 13 battalions, whilst the marines were divided between four battalions of infantry and 11 batteries of field guns. During the course of the siege an additional three provisional battalions of marines were created, as well as five further batteries. These were formed from men withdrawn from the forts, volunteers, veterans and a considerable number of escapees from Sedan. Additionally the navy was responsible for six of the major forts protecting Paris (Romainville, Noisy, Rosny, Ivry, Bicêtre and Montrouge), which between them mounted some 472 guns. Naval officers also commanded eight of the capital's nine defensive sectors.

The navy also operated a number of gunboats and

armoured trains during the siege. The naval flotilla, originally designed for use on the Rhine, was subsequently used to support the ground troops in Paris. A total of 20 vessels were available, including five armoured floating batteries mounting 14 cm guns. Another vessel, the *Farcy*, mounted a single fixed 24 cm gun and was used to inhibit the construction of bridges by the Germans; it was also involved in a number of lively counter-battery duels.



Infantryman, Garde Nationale. He is armed with the unusual model

1850 musket. (Private Collection)

The history of armoured trains in French service began some time before the war when a number of waggons were fitted with mitrailleuses. Indeed, Paris was particularly well suited to their use, having a line running all the way around the city with a number of tracks radiating to it from the centre. Those used in 1870 were designed by M. Dupuy de Lôme, Engineer in Chief of Naval Construction. Work was begun in October with two models initially built. Each had a single naval 14 cm breech-loader with an arc of fire of 30 degrees each side of centre. Initially drawn by three horses, they were naturally very slow, and the means of propulsion somewhat vulnerable to enemy fire. Later models each had two 16 cm breech-loaders which, though fixed, could be rotated on turntables. These waggons were drawn by locomotives encased in 10 mm iron plate; though well protected these were slow, averaging only 4-5 miles per hour. These



vehicles were charged with track-clearing duties and also served as mobile batteries. Naval personnel were also prominent in the operation of Paris' balloon and pigeon courier service.

The esprit de corps of these men is well illustrated by Capt. Krantz, commander of the *Fort d'Ivry*, who had an artificial poop deck constructed on the main bastion of the fort from which he scanned the horizon with his powerful naval telescope, pinpointing targets for his gunners. Each time a hit was scored he would rub his hands and murmur 'one less, one less'! When the city fell the Germans were so curious that they took the trouble to discover the name of the man they had dubbed '*Le ravageur*'.

The navy was also active in the provincial armies. For lack of suitable opportunities for their employment many naval vessels were put into reserve and the crews formed into provisional units for service on land. Twelve battalions of sailors were formed at Brest, Toulon and Cherbourg, nine of which saw action (six with the Army of the Loire and three with the Army of the North). The four regiments of marine infantry also contributed further drafts of experienced men which were organised at the regimental depots at Cherbourg, Brest, Rochefort and Toulon. A total of eight battalions and a number of smaller detachments were raised, numbering some 8,900 men. A considerable number of artillery batteries were also fielded, including one of American-made Gatling guns.

Naval troops were much in evidence in the Army of the Loire, where they took part in the first undisputed French victory of the war at Coulmiers, Adm. Jauréguiberry commanding a division of 16th Corps with some distinction. This success enabled the French to re-take Orléans, which was turned into an armed camp. Almost a thousand marines and naval gunners were employed in constructing a double line of defences north of the city. The naval personnel in the Army of the Loire further distinguished themselves in the long hard winter campaign which followed, particularly at Beaugency and Fréteval. The Army of the North also boasted a strong naval presence, the troops fighting well at Pont de Noyelles, Bapaume and St Quentin.

*Infantryman, 221st
Battalion, Garde
Nationale. He is armed*

*with a Tabatière rifle.
(Private Collection)*

THE FRANCS-TIREURS

The news of Sadowa renewed the fear of invasion in France's eastern provinces, where the memories of 1814 were still fresh. The various shooting clubs which existed, particularly in the Vosges Mountains, formed the basis for many groups of volunteers dedicated to the defence of the mountain passes. By 1867 there were four formed companies totalling around 800 men. The Great Universal Exhibition held in Paris that same year saw some 350 of these men visit the capital, where they were the object of much attention, being reviewed by the young Prince Imperial and later by the Emperor himself.

In order to regularise such groups, an annexe to the instructions concerning the *Garde Nationale Mobile* laid down regulations governing their recruitment. The cadre of each company was to consist of one captain, one lieutenant, one *sous-lieutenant*, one sergeant-major, four sergeants (one of whom was responsible for training), eight corporals and one bugler. These men were unpaid except for those with responsibility for training or administration and all buglers. The officers were nominated by the Emperor, whilst the NCOs were chosen by the local military authorities. All volunteers agreed to serve for one year, being attached to the *Garde Mobile*. They were not called upon to exercise together or to unite as one body in time of peace, and each group trained separately according to its own regulations. Their role in time of war was seen as primarily one of home defence, using their local knowledge to harass the enemy and provide intelligence. During 1868 a total of ten companies were formed, based at Ars-sur-Moselle, Colmar, Frouard, Lamarche, Metz, Mirecourt, Nancy, Neufbrisach, Saverne and Verdun. The death of Marshal Niel, creator of the *Garde Mobile*, saw both it and the *francs-tireurs* fall into disfavour, and no new companies were raised.

When war came the existing companies were theoretically mobilised along with the *Garde Mobile*, but although partisan activity began almost immediately their contribution was limited. Gen. Brincourt, commanding a brigade of the Guard Voltigeurs,

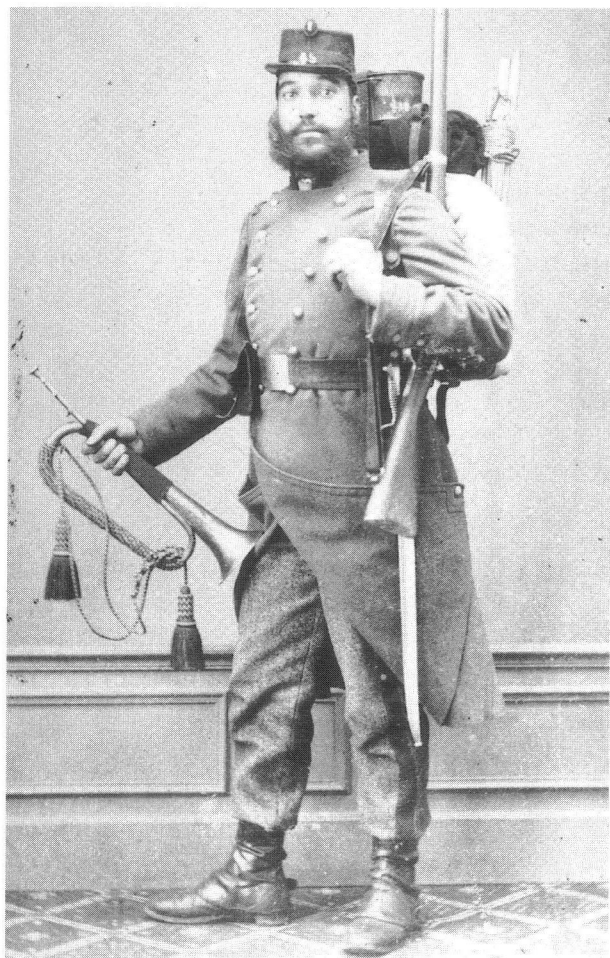


Garde Nationale de Paris uniform. (Private Collection wearing the old 1852 model)

noted acridly that when hostilities commenced they '... gave no sign of life ... the cock feathers which adorn the *francs-tireurs*' hats are nowhere to be seen. Their excellent Lefauchaux rifles are dumb'. Nevertheless it was the *francs-tireurs* who were responsible for the only invasion of German territory during the war, when a group of men from the Colmar and Neufbrisach companies crossed the Rhine in customs boats, tore up some railway track and cut telegraph lines. They then returned, towing behind them seven enemy pontoons.

The outbreak of war encouraged the creation of other such groups as many civilians came forward to volunteer. An Imperial decision of 28 July authorised the raising of provisional units whose term of engagement should last no longer than the duration of the war. These bodies were not attached to any regular formation, nor were they paid, although the authorities undertook to provide them with arms and ammunition.

It was after the fall of the Empire that the growth of *francs-tireurs* units began to increase dramatically. According to official figures 2,893 officers and 69,182



*Bugler, Garde Nationale
Mobilisée de Paris.
(Private Collection)*

men saw some form of service, organised into 91 battalions, 450 independent companies, 28 squadrons, 18 independent troops and 31 batteries. The volunteers came from a wide variety of social backgrounds and political persuasions, and included a considerable number of foreigners, particularly Italians under the arch-revolutionary himself — Garibaldi. The attitude of the authorities towards these irregulars was mixed. Many of Republican views, particularly Gambetta, saw them as the embodiment of their own ideals—independent, dynamic, self-sufficient individuals, the diametric opposite of their regimented Teutonic opponents. Indeed, some felt that the entire *Garde Mobile* should be used in the same fashion, wearing down the Germans by continual harassment until such time as

they could be met in open battle. The idea certainly had much to recommend it, particularly in view of the miserable level of training attained by most *Mobile* units. Unfortunately the overwhelming need to relieve Paris obliged the French to fight the Germans conventionally, with predictable consequences.

The effectiveness of the *francs-tireurs* during the war varied enormously, according to local circumstances. In some areas, particularly northern France, resistance was energetic if often unco-ordinated. In the Vosges Mountains activity was so great that after the fall of Strasbourg a new corps was created to contain it. The forces operating around Besançon were also highly effective, containing a good proportion of professional soldiers. The long lines of supply running between Paris and the Rhine were a particularly inviting target and the Germans were obliged to detach large numbers of troops, mainly from the *Landwehr*, to guard them. In other areas resistance was feeble, the populace to the south and south-west of Paris showing little enthusiasm for the war.

On the other hand many of the *francs-tireurs* units were little more than brigands, more dangerous to their own countrymen than to the Germans. Others were happy to swagger around in outlandish uniforms, avoiding anything that might resemble action. The behaviour of such groups provoked a series of measures designed to bring them under some form of control. On 29 September they were put on the same disciplinary footing as the *Garde Mobile*, and on 4 November placed at the disposal of the regular military commanders in whose area they were operating. They were also granted payment for their services, receiving one franc per day, although how regularly this was paid is open to question. (One unit, the *Francs-Tireurs de Savoie*, received 1fr 50 per day due to the fact that its officers contributed their surplus pay to the common fund. This admirable example of egalitarianism earned their unit the nickname 'The Aristocrats!') Units failing to obey orders or report for duty were to be disbanded.

The activities of the *francs-tireurs* were not limited to the provinces. The siege of Paris threw up many such units, some of which were remarkably good. The *Eclaireurs à Cheval de la Seine*, commanded by one Franchetti, an old soldier, was composed of experienced horsemen who provided their own equipment and mounts. They were prominent in the

first exchanges with the advancing German patrols and later acted as escort to Gen. Ducrot. The *Tirailleurs de la Seine*, one of the best irregular infantry units, took part in the sortie at Champigny; its losses were so heavy that it had to be disbanded. There were also a number of good volunteer artillery units, some of which were equipped with mitrailleuses. At the other extreme were the celebrated 'Amazons of the Seine' formed by one Félix Belly, whose intention was to organise ten battalions of female volunteers who were to perform, according to their creator, all the 'domestic and fraternal services compatible with moral order and military discipline'. The authorities quickly curtailed this initiative, seemingly more concerned with the fact that Belly was charging an enrolment fee rather than because of any military or moral misgivings that they may have entertained.

However amusing some of the *francs-tireurs* units may have been—and the Parisians were apparently highly amused by the Amazons—the activities of some were very effective. As an example of what a well equipped and well led unit could achieve, one need look no further than the destruction of the important Fontenoy Viaduct.

The raid was planned in order to cut the Paris–Strasbourg rail link as a prelude to the transfer of Bourbaki's army from the Loire to the East. The unit selected was the *Chasseurs des Vosges*, a well disciplined body containing many old soldiers. It set out with a battalion of *Mobiles* which, unable to keep up, was quickly left behind, leaving the *Chasseurs* to carry out the task alone. After a journey of 50 miles in deep snow, achieved in only 84 hours, they arrived at the outskirts of the village. By bad luck the garrison had been alerted by two cannon shots from the nearby fortress of Toul, which had nothing to do with the impending raid; Nevertheless the French decided to attack. The stealthy advance of the *Chasseurs* towards their objective was unfortunately spoiled when a bugler slipped and fell, provoking a ripple of laughter amongst the company. Challenged by a sentry, they charged forward into the railway station, routing the



Sergeant, Garde Nationale Mobilisée. He seems to be remarkably well equipped, including the much prized Chassepot and infantry

greatcoat. Note the pompon and battalion number on the képi band. (Private Collection)



A company of the Garde Nationale Mobilisée de Paris. They are carrying American Remington rifles. They also seem to

have acquired a standard of some sort, probably a company fanion. (Private Collection)

Germans who were occupying it. Meanwhile another party cut the telegraph wires, whilst a third dealt with the bridge guard. Other groups sealed off the area to prevent enemy reinforcements from interfering with the demolition. Working quickly and efficiently in the biting cold they laid the charges, the work only being interrupted by the approach of an enemy train—which beat a hasty retreat when warned by the retreating garrison. Shortly afterwards the viaduct was destroyed, and the French returned to their base.

Nor were the best *francs-tireurs* units limited to hit-and-run raids; some fought alongside the regular troops, and were solid enough under fire. Among the best examples were the units serving under Col. Lipowski, who operated skilfully in covering the flank of the Army of the Loire. At Châteaudun (18 October) a detachment of some 1,200 men (ten companies of the *francs-tireurs de Paris*, one company each of the *francs-tireurs de Nantes* and *de Cannes*, and 350 of the *Garde Nationale de Châteaudun*) fought far into the night against a full Prussian division until

forced to retreat.

Unfortunately these two actions were far from typical; and although the operations of the various irregular groups caused the Germans some anxiety, they were rarely well organised enough to be more than an irritation. As the war progressed the distinction between the uniformed irregular and the civilian became increasingly blurred, and the German reaction to them more intolerant. The retribution meted out succeeded, sometimes through its indiscriminate nature, in cowing the local population, who became less willing to support the actions of their countrymen. As the German lines of communication became more secure, activity also tended to die down of its own accord.

Les Volontaires de l'Ouest

For a number of years French troops had been stationed in Rome to guarantee the integrity of the Papal States, but following an agreement with Italy these were finally withdrawn in 1866. The French did, however, help the Papal government to raise other units to protect its borders, one of which was the *Zouaves Pontificaux*. When Garibaldi invaded in 1867 the French sent an expeditionary force which

1

2



1 General Chanzy
2 Hussar, 1st Régiment de Marche



1 Captain, 5th Lancers, Army of the Loire, October 1870
2 Sergeant, 7th Régiment de Marche
3 Infantry officer (Régiment de Ligne or de Marche), October–December 1870

- 1 Garde Mobile de la Seine
2 Lieutenant, Garde Mobile
3 Garde Mobile de la Gironde





1 Drummer, 254th Battalion, Garde Nationale Mobilisée, Paris
2 Sous-lieutenant, Garde Nationale Mobilisée
3 Garde Nationale Sédentaire de Morbihan, 1870-71

- 1 Marine infantryman, Siege of Paris
2 Colonel of Engineers
3 Garde Nationale à Cheval, Paris



- 1 Colonel of Spahis
2 Foreign Legion infantryman, 1870-71
3 Sergeant-major, 1st Battalion, Infanterie Légère d'Afrique



- 1 Garibaldian lieutenant, Army of the Vosges, November 1870
- 2 Colonel, Volontaires de l'Ouest (ex-Zouaves Pontificaux)
- 3 Volontaire de l'Ouest, Battle of Loigny, 2 December 1870





1 Corporal, Francs-Tireurs de Châteaudun
2 Eclaireurs à Cheval Bretons, Army of the Loire, December 1870
3 Franc-Tireur de Jonsac, Army of the Vosges

defeated him at the battle of Mentana; the Zouaves were the first into action, and fought very well.

After Sedan the French contingent returned home, and its commander, Col. de Charette, offered its services to the Republic. By 7 October the troops had been organised into three battalions of six companies each plus three depot companies, a squadron of mounted *éclaireurs* and a mountain battery, with a total strength of 64 officers, 1,620 men, 80 cavalry and 80 gunners. The unit also took a new name: the *Volontaires de l'Ouest*.

Compared to the hastily raised levies that formed the bulk of France's armies the *Volontaires* were experienced troops, and in the coming campaign they fought with distinction. At the battle of Loigny (2 December) the 2nd Battalion helped to cover the retreat of the dispirited 16th Corps. Charging with the bayonet, they were met with heavy fire and forced to retire, losing 18 officers and 198 men out of 300. During the campaign the men were armed with a mixture of Chassepots and Remingtons.

Garibaldi

The relationship between the great revolutionary and the French nation was an ambiguous one. On the one hand he was conscious of his own debt to the country that had helped free Italy from the Austrians, as well as the support he personally had received from French Republicans. On the other he could not forget, or forgive, the role that Napoleon's troops had played in the rout of his men at Mentana. His reaction to the fall of the Empire was one of satisfaction, and he expressed the view that the Germans had rendered Europe a great service. However, when the Republic was declared and the war seemed set to continue his attitude changed dramatically. On 7 September he sent a telegram to the new government offering his help, a move which surprised and angered many of his supporters. Nevertheless Garibaldi was determined to do all he could to support the new Republic, and set sail for France, landing at Marseilles on 7 October to a hero's welcome.

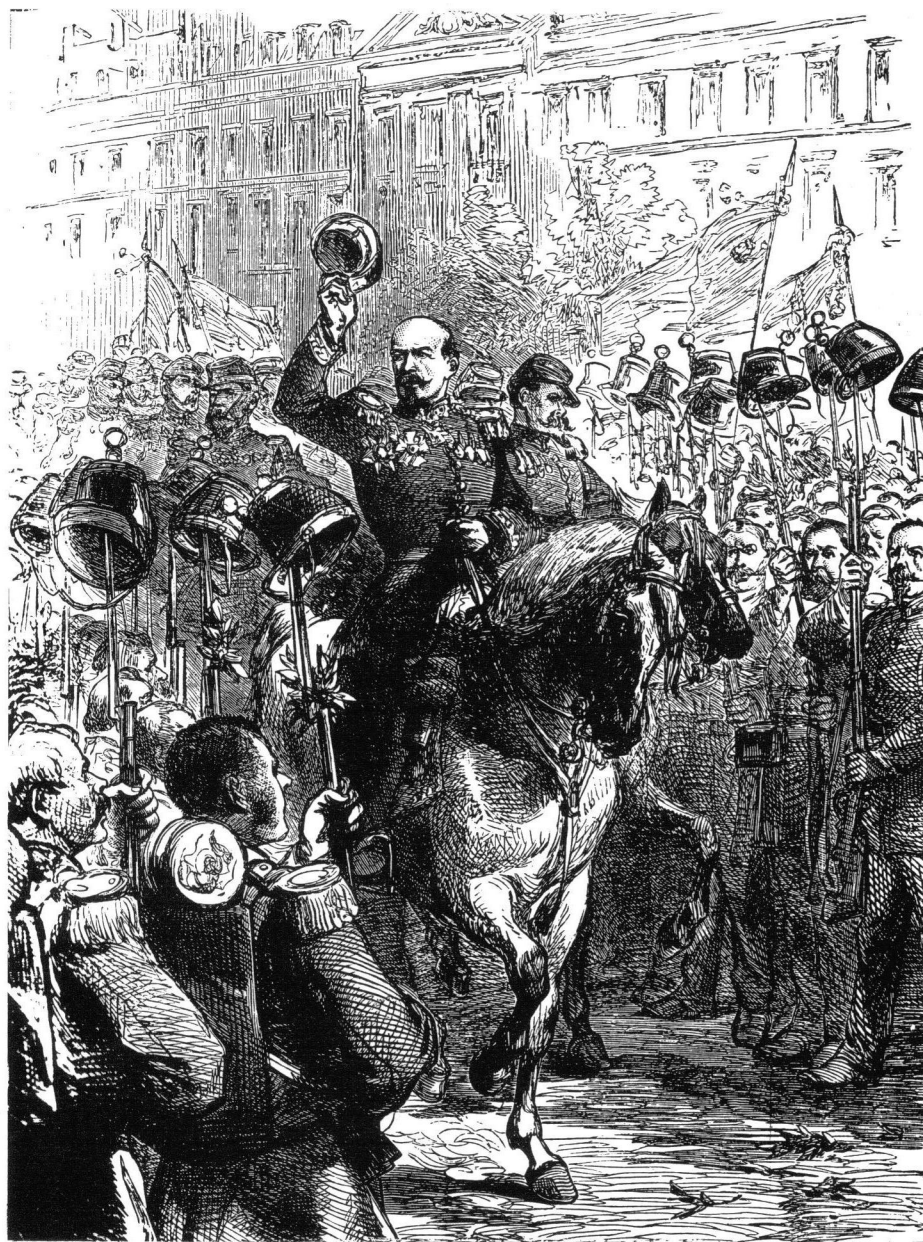
The reaction in France to his arrival was mixed. Many on the right, and particularly the Church, regarded him with open hostility, whilst others who were more sympathetic to his views often saw him as a trouble-maker. Nevertheless his popular reputation was such that his offer of help could not be refused.



Garde Nationale à Cheval in full dress, wearing a uniform inspired by that of the lancers. Compare

this photograph with his appearance on campaign in plate E3. (Private Collection)

On 9 October he arrived at Tours to meet Gambetta, who had recently made his dramatic escape from Paris by balloon. He thanked Garibaldi for his help and asked him to take command of 300 volunteers. Not surprisingly he refused to accept such an offer, and was preparing to return to Italy when Gambetta visited him in person to give him command of the various *francs-tireurs* units operating in the east of France.



General Trochu reviewing a unit of the Garde Nationale. The artist here has allowed himself considerable licence, showing the men wearing epaulettes and shako.

His new command was a very mixed bag, made up of a bewildering variety of *francs-tireurs* groups, including English, Spanish, Greek and even an Egyptian contingent, as well as some 2,000 Italians; there were also several units of *Mobiles* and *Gardes Nationales*, plus a few marines, the total amounting by mid-November to some 12,000 men. Despite the deep mistrust of the population, a lack of co-operation from the local military authorities and a severe shortage of supplies and equipment, this rag-bag of an army was to cause the Germans some severe

problems. Apart from a constant harassment of patrols and garrisons they proved able to inflict more serious reverses.

On 19 November, part of the 4th Brigade under Garibaldi's son Ricciotti attacked three companies of Landwehr at Châtillon, killing or taking almost 200 of them. This success encouraged them to attack Dijon, which they did a week later, but on this occasion they were forced to retreat to their base at Autun hotly pursued by the Germans. For a time it seemed that they would be forced to evacuate the town, but

French activity elsewhere forced the Germans to retrace their steps to Dijon.

The war elsewhere was now reaching its climax. Paris, although secure from direct assault, was fast running out of food, whilst Chanzy on the Loire and Faidherbe in the north had been held. It was therefore decided to transfer Bourbaki's army to the east, from where he could cut the over-stretched German communications. This ambitious plan called for Garibaldi's men to cover the operation's left flank, although liaison between the two was very poor.

The resulting campaign was a nightmare, carried out in sub-zero temperatures and with huge logistical problems. Bourbaki's ill-trained army was outfought and outmanoeuvred, finally being forced to retreat into neutral Switzerland, where it was interned. Garibaldi meanwhile had fallen ill, and when the Germans attacked was obliged to lead his men from a carriage. In the ensuing battle they fought remarkably well, inflicting some 700 casualties and taking the standard of the 61st (8th Pomeranian) Regiment, claimed by the Germans to be the only standard lost by them during the war. (The French dispute this, claiming that a standard of the 16th (3rd Westphalian) Regiment was taken at Mars la Tour.) Shortly thereafter word reached Garibaldi that an armistice had been agreed; ironically, this did not include the area in which his troops were operating, and it was not for some days that the war was officially concluded.

THE HIGH COMMAND

The generals called upon to replace those lost at Sedan and Metz came from a variety of backgrounds. Many were long-service professionals similar to those who had fought under the Empire but who, for one reason or another, had not been selected or available for the opening campaign. Others were chosen for their ability or enthusiasm by the new government who, anxious to carry on the war as effectively as

possible, set aside the more conventional structures of military hierarchy. By a decree of 13 October all restrictions on promotion were abolished, thereby allowing energetic young men such as Gen. de Sonis to command a corps. A further decree the following day allowed anyone, regardless of background, to hold a commission, opening the door for civilians and even foreigners. The result was in stark contrast to the closed and conservative professionalism of the Imperial army. Although ultimately unsuccessful, these new commanders showed an energy and determination that had been noticeably lacking in their predecessors. It was unfortunate for France that as her generals improved, her soldiers steadily deteriorated.

General Trochu

A graduate of the Ecole Militaire and Staff School, he won the Légion d'Honneur in Algeria. He later commanded a brigade in the Crimea, where he was



*Captain Kellaud, 3rd
Marine Battalion, Fort de*

*Romainville. (Private
Collection)*

wounded, and a division in Italy. He sat on a commission to examine the preparedness of the army for war after the Compiègne conference, and leaked the subsequent report: published under the title *l'Armée Française en 1867*, his book was a thoroughgoing criticism of the military establishment, which foresaw many of the weaknesses which led to defeat in



1870. It also made him very unpopular both at Court and with his colleagues. At the outbreak of war he commanded an observation force in the Pyrenees, and was later given 12th Corps. He subsequently led the Parisian *Mobiles* back to the capital. After the fall of the Empire he became President of the Council and chief military advisor to the new government. Although doubtful of the possibility of success and under intense public pressure, he planned the unsuccessful breakout from Paris.

General Ducrot

Another able professional soldier, he commanded a division at Froeschwiller and 1st Corps at Sedan. He briefly succeeded MacMahon following his wound, and was planning a breakout when he was replaced by de Wimpffen. Captured with the rest of the army, he contrived to return to Paris where he took command of the 2nd Army, which contained most of the remaining regular troops. He led the great sortie, declaring: 'As for myself, I have made up my mind, and I swear before you and before the entire nation: I shall only re-enter Paris dead or victorious. You may see me fall, but you will not see me yield ground.' In the end, despite his rhetoric, he recognised the impossibility of continuing the war and advised that peace be made as quickly as possible.

General Bourbaki

Of Greek descent, he had served in both the Zouaves and Zéphyrs, and commanded a brigade in the Crimea and a division in Italy. In 1870 this flamboyant veteran initially commanded the Imperial Guard. He left Metz during the siege on an errand to the Empress with a plan to make peace and restore the Empire. The mission failed, and, unable to rejoin the army, he offered his services to the new government. He commanded first the Army of the North and later the 2nd Army of the Loire, with which he operated in the east against the German communications. He was finally forced to lead his men into neutral Switzerland rather than surrender, and later attempted suicide. A curiously pessimistic figure, he twice complained that he was too old for war, once after Rezonville and again after the battle on the Lisaine.

General Ducrot. Note the rank insignia on cuffs and képi.



General Chanzy.

General Chanzy

Like many of his colleagues he was out of the country when war was declared, and returned too late to take part in the initial campaign. He more than made up for it when he did begin to fight. A soldier of great determination, he realised the limitations of his troops and used them accordingly, achieving considerable success. An optimist, he was almost alone in wishing to continue the war, which he believed could be won.

General Aurelle de Paladines

Another able veteran of the Crimea, he took over 15th Corps at a time when morale was very low due to reverses suffered near Orléans. A deeply religious man, he clashed violently with his doctrinaire political masters over the prosecution of the war. He was nevertheless able to transmit his own enthusiasm to the troops, who under his leadership gained their first victory at Coulmiers.



General Faidherbe.

General Faidherbe

Ex-Governor of Senegal and an experienced soldier-statesman, he also arrived in France too late to fight in the opening campaign. He took command of the Army of the North, causing the Germans considerable trouble, defeating them at Ham and holding the able Manteuffel to a creditable draw at La Hallue. Despite his efforts he was finally defeated at St Quentin, where his army disintegrated.

WEAPONS

The huge losses in arms and equipment suffered by the armies of the Rhine and of Châlons, coupled with the large increase in the number of men called to the colours, presented the new government with a considerable problem. (At Sedan and Metz some 300,000 Chassepots were lost, along with more than

1,000 field guns.) Although many weapons remained in store there were not enough to go round, a situation made worse by the isolation of the nation's central depot—Paris—and of other significant fortresses, particularly Metz. The shortfall was very severe in modern small arms, particularly the excellent Chassepot. It was estimated that of the 800,000 men available in February 1871 only 290,000 had this weapon, whilst another 150,000 had other types of breech-loader; the remainder were equipped with a variety of muzzle-loaders, some of which were flintlocks.

The Système Tabatière

The adoption of the Chassepot left the French army with a large number of muzzle-loading weapons which were now obsolete. A study began in 1864 to decide what could be done with them, and it was decided to convert them into breech-loaders. By the outbreak of war much of this work had already been carried out by private contractors. Collectively known as the *Système Tabatière* (so called because the

breech mechanism resembled a snuff box—*tabatière*), they were used to equip many units of the *Garde Mobile* and *Garde Nationale*. They were, however, unpopular with the men, who felt disadvantaged compared to their comrades fortunate enough to have the Chassepot. In performance it was certainly a much inferior weapon, being both heavier and more cumbersome; the ammunition was also heavier, resulting in fewer rounds being carried. During the war most of these weapons were stockpiled in the major towns and fortresses and tended to equip those units besieged in them. Some, however, were used by regiments in the field. (See Table A.)

Foreign Weapons

An important source of rifles and other small arms were those of foreign manufacture. France's naval supremacy ensured a steady supply of weapons from abroad, particularly from the United States, much to the annoyance of Prussia. Up to March 1871 these purchases included 4,878 Chassepots manufactured under licence, 24,732 Sniders, 66,710 'Egyptian' Model Remingtons, and 210,000 other types including Springfields, Winchesters, Sharps, Enfields, Miniés and Spencers. Many of these weapons were not in very good condition, often being left over from

Bastion number 40 during the siege of Paris, armed with a heavy calibre gun and manned by the navy.

Note the two part round about to be loaded. (Private Collection)

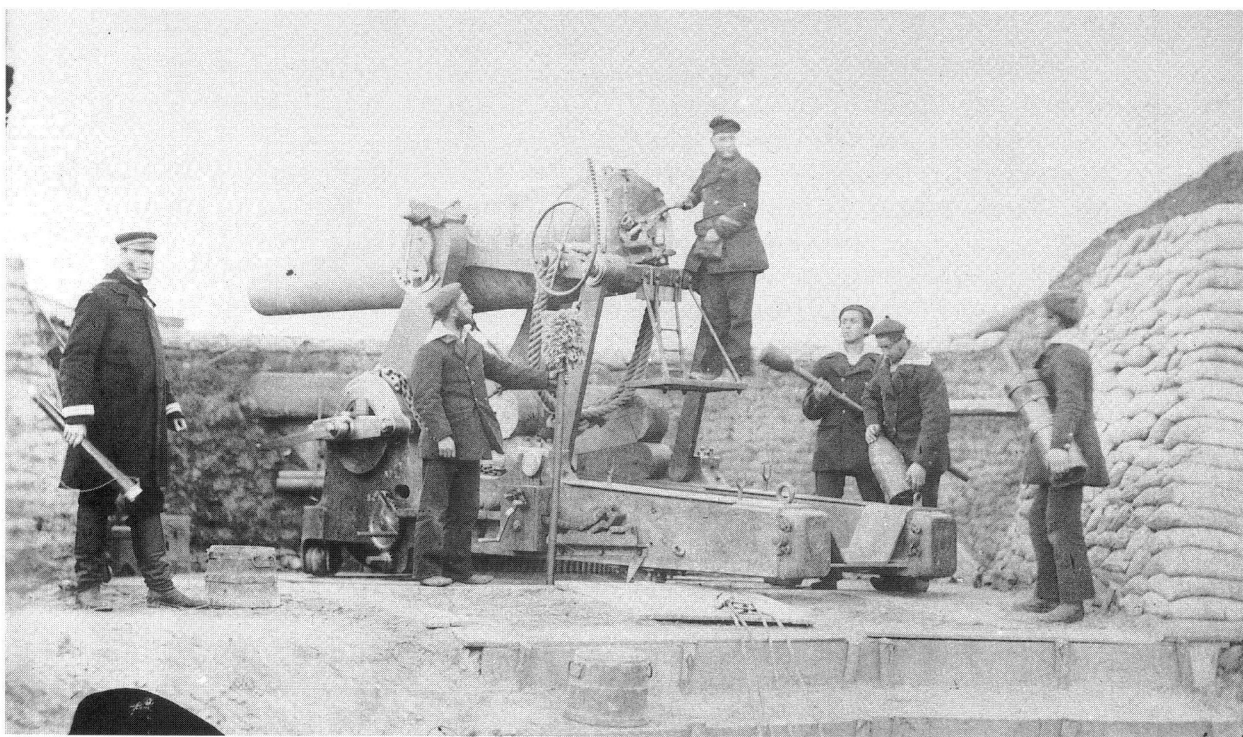


Table A: Système Tabatière

<i>Model</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Length (mm)</i>	<i>Barrel length</i>	<i>Calibre</i>	<i>Bayonet</i>
Infantry	4.45 kg	1,421	958	17.8 mm	1847 triangular
Infantry	4.2 kg	1,421	958	18.0 mm	1822/47 triangular
Dragoon	4 kg	1,319	849	17.8 mm	1847 triangular
Gendarme	3.4 kg	1,150	685	17.6 mm	1847 triangular
Chasseur	4.5 kg	1,262	795	17.8 mm	1859 sabre

the American Civil War. A considerable number did not even have an attachment for a bayonet.

Artillery

Despite the loss of virtually all the Imperial army's field artillery there were still considerable numbers of guns available. In addition to the Reffye mitrailleuse and the 4-pdr. and 12-pdr. field guns used under the Empire, a number of other models were employed. The 8-pdr. muzzle-loader, adopted by an Imperial decision of 6 February 1869, made use of large numbers of old smoothbores still in the arsenals; these guns were re-bored to take rifled ammunition and were designed to replace the 12-pounders. Similar in performance to the *canon de 12*, 120 were available at the outbreak of war.

In 1869 the Emperor had instructed the director of the artillery workshop at Meudon to examine the possibility of producing a breech-loading bronze cannon with a high muzzle velocity and long range. Two models were built, a 4-pdr. and a 7-pdr., which were tested by the Guard Artillery. The trials were interrupted by the outbreak of war, but on 3 August the Minister of War was sufficiently impressed to order six batteries of the 7-pdr. and 15,000 rounds. Unfortunately the ammunition was captured by the advancing Prussians, and it was decided to cancel the contract; but public opinion was enthusiastic for such weapons, and this pressure forced the new government to order 60 of the guns. With a range of 5,000 metres it was a good piece, although its effectiveness was limited by a lack of proper training in its use. It was first employed during the sortie at Champigny, and by the end of the siege 230 were available, 48 of which were in service with the 2nd Army and the remainder in the forts. In addition to these a number

of light mountain batteries were employed, alongside a considerable quantity of foreign weapons, notably 330 Parrotts bought from the United States.

More significant than the new guns was the improvement in the ammunition used. After the disappointing performance of the time fuses, the Government of National Defence replaced them with percussion fuses. Their first widespread use at Coulmiers allowed the French to gain fire superiority over the Germans for the first time in the war. The arsenal at Metz also produced a limited number for the army invested there. These were issued on the basis of three per limber on 25 August, eight more on 6 September and a further ten on 8 September. Although much more effective, percussion rounds were not without their drawbacks, often failing to explode on soft ground; and if the angle of impact was wrong the plunger holding the percussion cap failed to jar forward sufficiently to detonate it.

The interest in machine guns was if anything even greater under the Republic than it had been under the Empire, with a number of new models being manufactured locally. The Mitrailleuse Chevalier et Grenier consisted of two banks of eight barrels, one on top of the other, with a calibre of 11 mm. The Mitrailleuse Bollée equipped many batteries in the Army of the Loire; similar to the Reffye in appearance, it had two circular groups of barrels, 18 in the outer and 12 in the inner ring, and a calibre of 13 mm. The Mitrailleuse Gabert was unusual in that it had the appearance of a more modern machine gun, having four barrels (calibre 11 mm) mounted on a tripod. A few imported Gatlings were also used.

The large number of sieges conducted during the war of 1870 saw the use of a wide variety of heavy guns, particularly by the French. The two main siege

guns were the 12-pdr. and 24-pdr., both of which were rifled bronze muzzle-loaders (see Table B). Two other heavy guns were also used as position pieces: the 16 cm and 22 cm smoothbore howitzers (model 1828). Both had a very limited range (2,500 and 2,800 metres respectively). There were also four types of mortar: the 15 cm, 22 cm, 27 cm and 32 cm. All were smoothbores of limited effectiveness.

This shortage of adequate heavy guns obliged the authorities to call on the navy for assistance, and a

considerable number of guns were provided by them during the siege of Paris (see Table C). All these models were rifled breech-loaders. By 1870 a range of new naval guns was entering service, designed to replace the older models whose armour penetration was felt to be insufficient against the more modern ironclads. Again, all were rifled breech-loaders (see Table D). Finally there were a number of older muzzle-loading coastal guns which were drafted into service (see Table E).

Table B

	<i>Model</i>	<i>Calibre</i>	<i>Max range</i>	<i>Common shell weight</i>	<i>Charge weight</i>	<i>Initial muzzle velocity</i>
12 pdr.	1839/59	121.3 mm	5,100 m	11.5 kg	1.4 kg	340 mps
24 pdr.	1866/67	152.7 mm	5,100 m	24 kg	2.5 kg	291 mps

Table C

	<i>Model</i>	<i>Calibre</i>	<i>Max range</i>	<i>Common shell weight</i>	<i>Charge weight</i>	<i>Initial muzzle velocity</i>
14 cm	1864/67	138.6 mm	5,600 m	18.65 kg	2.5 kg	321 mps
16 cm	1864/66	164.7 mm	7,200 m	31.49 kg	5/7.5 kg	325 mps
16 cm	1858/60	164.7 mm	6,400 m	31.49 kg	3.5 kg	317 mps
19 cm	1864/66	194 mm	7,000 m	52.25 kg	8/12.5 kg	356 mps
24 cm	1864/66	240 mm	8,000 m	100 kg	16/24 kg	362 mps
27 cm	1864/66	274.4 mm	8,000 m	144 kg	24/36 kg	362 mps

Table D

	<i>Model</i>	<i>Calibre</i>	<i>Max range</i>	<i>Common shell weight</i>	<i>Charge weight</i>	<i>Initial muzzle velocity</i>
14 cm	1870	138.6 mm	?	21 kg	4.1 kg	455 mps
16 cm	1870	164.7 mm	?	38.25 kg	9.5 kg	477/508 mps
19 cm	1870	194 mm	?	62.5 kg	15 kg	450/485 mps
24 cm	1870	240 mm	10,000 m	120 kg	28 kg	440/474 mps
27 cm	1870	274.4 mm	11,800 m	180 kg	42 kg	432/470 mps
32 cm	1870	320 mm	12,000 m	286.5 kg	66 kg	425 mps

Table E

	<i>Model</i>	<i>Calibre</i>	<i>Max range</i>	<i>Common shell weight</i>	<i>Charge weight</i>	<i>Initial muzzle velocity</i>
14cm Smoothbore	1858 1820/	138.6 mm	6,000 m	?	?	315 mps
16 cm Rifled	40/49/ 58	164.7 mm	6,500 m	31.49 kg	3.5 kg	301 mps
22 cm Rifled	1827/ 41/64	223.3 mm	5,200 m	79.58 kg	6 kg	257 mps

STANDARDS

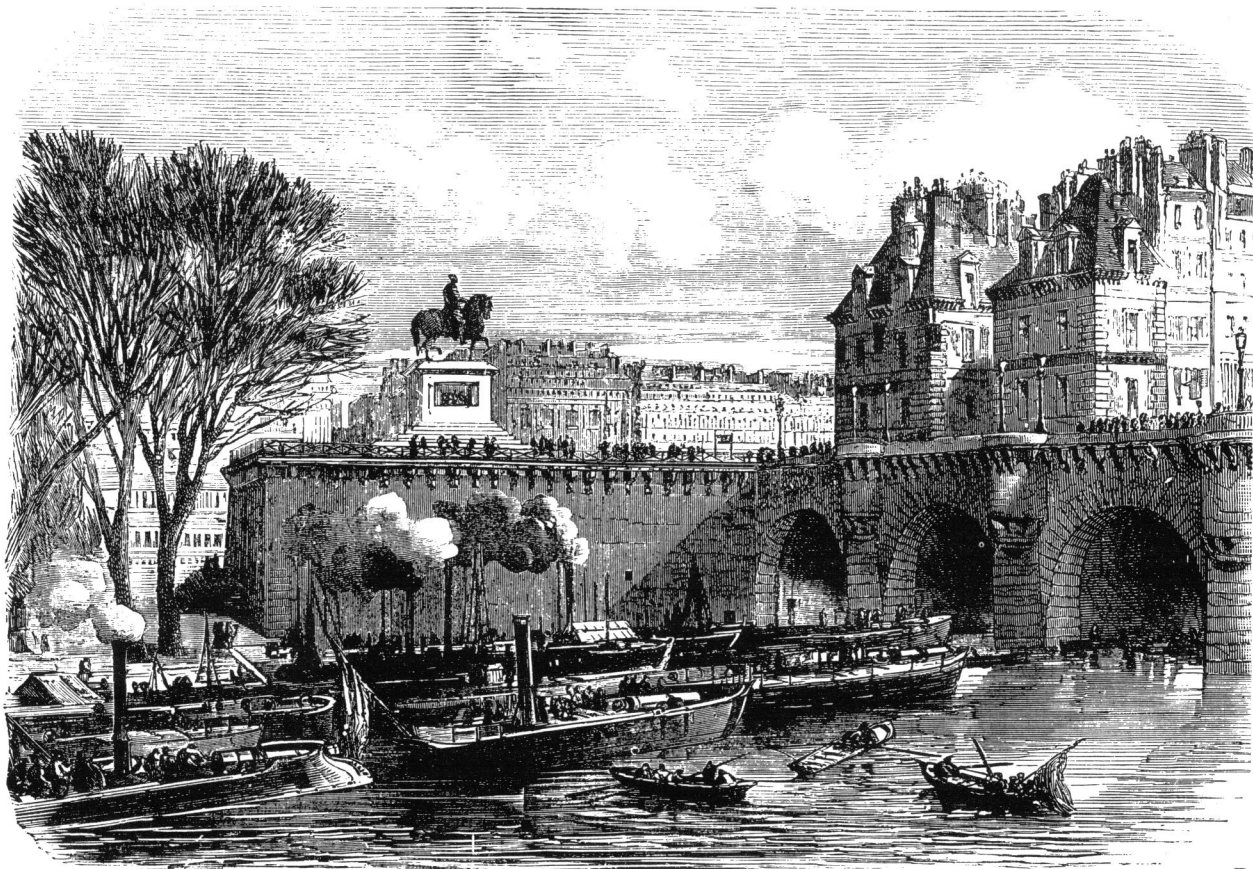
The fall of the Empire and the need to continue the war left the new government with other things on its mind. Understandably hostile to the previous regime, it issued an order on 18 September for all eagles to be sent to the nearest artillery *direction*, where many were later destroyed. Apart from this, however, no clear indication was given regarding what kind of standards could be carried. The only eagles left were those belonging to the few regular regiments still at liberty, and those, such as that of the Chasseur corps, which had been left at the depots. The 16th, 38th and 39th Regiments left both eagles and flags in Algeria, as did the Foreign Legion; whilst the 92nd took its flag, minus the Imperial trappings, on campaign. The 35th and 42nd Regiments, the only regular infantry units to take part in the siege of Paris,

also carried their flags, and became known as 'La Brigade des Drapeaux'.

Provisional regiments, being composed of the fourth battalions of three different regiments, had no entitlement to a flag; indeed, such units did not even have a standard bearer on the strength; nevertheless, fanions of various designs were often carried. The Zouave regiment created in Paris acquired a tricolour flag with the simple inscription *4e Régiment de Zouaves*, whilst the Chasseur battalions often carried a small tricolour fanion.

The *Garde Mobile* had no standard bearers on its establishment or any official entitlement to a standard, but the majority of units managed to acquire one. The number carried by a particular unit also tended to vary between one per regiment and one per battalion. These emblems were decorated to the taste of the unit concerned and were often of a very simple design: for example that of the 4th Battalion of the Breton Mobile Regiment (*Loire Inférieure*) was fashioned from a white handkerchief, a blue cravat and a piece of red cloth torn from an armchair! A number of

Gunboats on the Seine.



THE PLATES



Volontaire de l'Ouest in
1870, carrying an old

percussion rifle. (Private
Collection)

flags were given to units by the town from which they came; while another was presented by the inhabitants of Bitsche to its garrison, who successfully resisted the Germans until the armistice—the flag was in the form of a tricolour, which bore the coat of arms of the town and the inscription ‘*La ville de Bitsche à ses défenseurs 6 Août 1870—12 Mars 1871*’.

The *Garde Nationale* received eagles under the Empire; these were not carried under the Republic, although it does seem likely that some unofficial standards were used on campaign. The *Francs-Tireurs* were, as one might expect, a law unto themselves, and carried a wide variety of flags and fanions. One of the most interesting was that carried by the *Volontaires de l'Ouest*, which consisted of a white silk banner fringed in gold, with the image of a heart, above which was the inscription ‘*Coeur de Jésus*’ and underneath ‘*Sauvez la France*’.

After the fall of the Empire in September 1870 three characteristics can be discerned concerning the uniforms of the French army during the last few months of the war. Primarily they were distinguished by great simplicity, partly for financial reasons and partly due to the disappearance of the army's sartorial elite: the Imperial Guard. Secondly, the Republican period saw the flowering of a multitude of volunteer units who followed a very individual approach to dress, adopting a wide variety of colourful (and often outlandish) confections of their own design. Thirdly, there was a marked deterioration in the quality of uniforms, which were often supplied by unscrupulous manufacturers at high prices. Identification of some basic items of uniform and equipment will be found in the Plates commentary of MAA 232, *Imperial Troops*.

A1: General Chanzy

Commander of the 2nd Army of the Loire, Chanzy had a martial appearance much exploited by later artists. In common with many other generals and contrary to regulations he chose not to wear the braided kepi, but rather one decorated with seven stripes and the stars of a *général de division*, as was customary among the *africains*, of whom he was one. The wearing of the pelisse, instead of the regulation tunic, was typical of the winter of 1870–71. The undress shabraque shown here was used on campaign, that used for full dress had edging bands of gold lace.

A2: Hussar, 1st Régiment de Marche

The *régiments de marche* and *régiments mixtes* contained elements, usually full squadrons, of several different regiments in the uniforms of their parent unit. This particular example was composed of squadrons of the 2nd, 4th, 6th and 7th Regiments. Illustrated here is the uniform of the 7th Hussars, distinguished by the green dolman with golden yellow braid. The campaign equipment, laid down by an instruction of July 1870, consisted of tent poles and cooking equipment. Three other *régiments de marche* were also created: the 2nd and 4th from squadrons of the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Regiments and

the 3rd from elements of the 4th and 7th Regiments. The Hussars were also represented in the 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th *régiments mixtes*.

B1: Captain, 5th Lancers, Army of the Loire, October 1870

This uniform still retains much of the splendour of the Empire, even though the czapska, the regulation headgear on campaign, has been replaced by the képi. The tunic is the new 1868 model, although the earlier *habit* was still widely used. The pouch belt was covered on campaign in dark red leather secured by buttons of the basic uniform type. The revolver carried in the waistband is of French (Lefauchaux) or American (Colt or Remington) origin; in July 1870 officers had been given a sum of money to purchase such non-regulation weapons.

B2: Sergeant, 7th Régiment de Marche

This infantryman is none other than Sergeant Hoff, celebrated sharpshooter and terror of the Germans

*Officers of the Volontaires
de l'Ouest. (Private
Collection)*

during the siege of Paris, who survived until 1902 as guardian of the Arc de Triomphe. The uniform had undergone several modifications since the start of the war, such as the removal of epaulettes, the darker (non regulation) colour of the greatcoat, and the lack of buttons on the cuffs. A picture of Hoff leads one to believe that the *régiments de marche* were distinguished by the regimental number following the letter 'M' on the képi band, although this was probably far from universal.

B3: Infantry officer (Régiment de Ligne or de Marche), October–December 1870

Many officers, particularly in Bazaine's army at Metz, had begun to adopt the other ranks' greatcoat as campaign dress from the early stages of the war, as both more practical and more discreet. The officer represented here is a colonel, as distinguished by the five gold stripes around the cuffs and képi.

C1: Garde Mobile de la Seine

The 18 Parisian battalions of the 75th Regiment (75 being Paris' Departmental number, by which all *Mobile* regiments were numerated) were well





Francs-tireurs units of Garibaldi's Army of the Vosges.

favoured in matters of dress, both in terms of quality and in conformity to the regulations of 15 May 1868. In addition to wearing the regimental number on the pompon, they also wore their battalion number on the képi band. In fact the number 75 representing the Parisian regiment meant little in reality as the 18 battalions were subsequently formed into six separate regiments numbered one to six. In 1868 the authorities had refused to allow the *Mobiles* to wear the red trousers of the line in order to avoid any confusion between the regular and reserve forces. The final version of their uniform was similar to that of the *Garde Nationale*, which did little to improve morale as the '*moblots*' regarded themselves as being treated as second-class soldiers. By an instruction of 12 October 1870, 100 infantry pattern greatcoats were to be issued to each battalion for use on guard duties. According to one eye-witness these arrived without buttons, the deficiency being remedied from every conceivable source, resulting in a mixture of buttons bearing the Imperial eagle and many other devices and numbers. If such was the lack of uniformity amongst the favoured Parisian *Mobiles*, how much worse it must have been for the provincial regiments.

C2: Lieutenant, Garde Mobile

This uniform is typical of that worn by the majority of officers, regardless of the origin of their unit. On the tunic sleeves the facings could be either straight with horizontal braid, or in the form of a Hungarian knot as shown here. The latter was of course much more expensive, but also more prestigious.

C3: Garde Mobile de la Gironde

This unit, which served in the Army of the Loire, (2nd Division, 15th Corps), is typical of the provincial *Mobiles*, which were less favoured in terms of dress than their Parisian counterparts, or those from the eastern departments. The uniforms, often of poor quality, were provided by merchants approved by the local prefects rather than by the Ministry of War. The képi is the simplified 1868 model, without either pompon or cockade. This particular unit was armed with Remington rifles.

D1: Drummer, 254th Battalion, Garde Nationale Mobilisée, Paris

A circular of 13 August 1870 insisted that the uniforms for the *Garde Nationale* were to be '... of the most simple kind. A jacket with rank insignia on the cuffs and collar will suffice'. This modest injunction was gradually made more definite by a succession

of orders which attempted to establish a more regular pattern, though this was naturally subject to the materials locally available

The *Garde Nationale Mobilisée* was distinguished from the *Garde Nationale Sédentaire* only in the quality of their weapons, which were generally better (either Chassepots or Remingtons), although some units were also issued with greatcoats, much appreciated on sentry duty. The trouser stripe, képi piping and other distinctions were in scarlet for the *Garde Nationale*, rather than the madder red of the *Mobiles*. During the course of the war a wide variety of non-regulation or civilian items were worn in an effort to make up for the often serious deficiencies encountered by these hastily raised formations.

D2: Sous-lieutenant, Garde Nationale Mobilisée

In common usage, this is perhaps the most representative uniform of the siege of Paris. All manner of weapons were carried by the officers of the *Garde Nationale*, this particular example being an other ranks' artillery sabre mod. 1829 (which had been withdrawn in the artillery in 1869).

D3: Garde Nationale Sédentaire de Morbihan, 1870-71

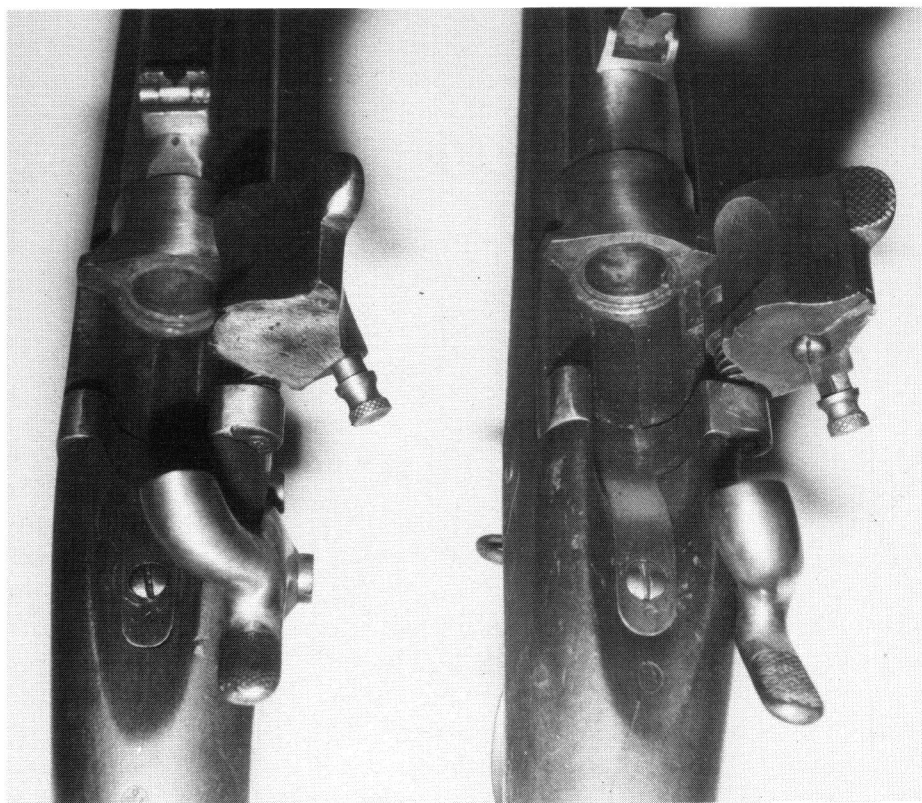
There were many variations of this uniform according to the department of origin, as dress was fixed in practice by the prefects rather than by the Ministry of War. This example was approved by the prefect of Vannes on 14 September 1870. The men were armed with percussion rifles (here the mod. 1842T) or with the *Tabatière* mod. 1867.

E1: Marine infantryman, Siege of Paris

The typical items of dress worn by the marines—tunic (*caban*), white naval shirt and working hat—distinguished these fine troops from all others during the siege. With the exception of the belt, the equipment was the same as that in the infantry. Contrary to popular belief, and many contemporary illustrations, the marines never carried axes in action, being armed with the Chassepot. In cold weather a sheepskin jerkin was often worn over a short jacket. Some units also wore the standard infantry greatcoat.

E2: Colonel of Engineers

The engineers played a considerable part in the war,



Tabatière rifle model 1867 showing the breech open. (Private Collection)

particularly during the Republican phase, as illustrated by the skilful defence of Belfort by Col. Denfert-Rochereau. The uniform depicted here is strictly regulation, and typical of campaign dress. In full dress the officers wore the *habit* with black velvet plastron, whereas the troops had received the tunic in 1864.

E3: Garde Nationale à Cheval, Paris

Used as couriers for the General Staff during the siege, these horsemen, often from bourgeois or wealthy backgrounds, wore this curious uniform first adopted in 1852. It is noticeable that the majority of uniforms worn by the *Garde Nationale* were black, following current fashion, rather than the regulation

dark blue. Following a review on 13 September, where the unit acted as escort to General Trochu, it was instructed to replace the czapska with the more practical képi.

F1: Colonel of Spahis

Whilst the men and native officers wore Arab dress similar to that of the Zouaves, the French officers sported European type uniforms, first introduced in 1841 and little modified thereafter. Typical of its time, the uniform was simple yet elegant.

F2: Foreign Legion infantryman, 1870-71

This uniform was directly related to that worn by the infantry as laid down in the regulations of December



General Vinoy. He initially commanded 13th Corps, which he succeeded in extricating from the Sedan debacle, and later the 3rd Army of Paris.

1867, differing only in detail (red star on the képi and dark blue collar patches on the greatcoat). The epaulettes were of a type particular to the Legion, first introduced on 27 January 1868; on campaign they were always worn. The French-raised 5th Bn. wore a white '5' on the cap, old green epaulettes with red crescents only, and white metal buttons.

F3: Sergeant-major, 1st Battalion, Infanterie Légère d'Afrique

Also fixed by the 1867 regulations, the uniform was a curious mixture of those worn by the Chasseurs à Pied (pointed cuffs and piping and white buttons bearing a horn) and that of the infantry. Senior NCOs were armed in the same way as the men, not receiving the revolver and sabre until after the war.

G1: Garibaldian lieutenant, Army of the Vosges, November 1870

The Italian volunteers fighting for France retained the distinctive red uniforms that had made them so famous ten years earlier during the expedition of 'The Thousand' in Sicily. Many officers also made use of the braided dolman.

G2: Colonel, Volontaires de l'Ouest (ex-Zouaves Pontificaux)

The Zouave style uniform was introduced in this corps in July–August 1860, and was worn by both officers and other ranks. Extremely popular, it is reminiscent of many similar confections worn by units in the American Civil War. The uniform worn by the officers was of a lighter, bluer hue than that worn by the men.

G3: Volontaire de l'Ouest, Battle of Loigny, 2 December 1870

The majority of the other ranks' uniforms had been made in France towards the end of the year following the unit's return from Italy, and were of grey cloth rather than the customary light blue. Their quality left a great deal to be desired, and the design was much better suited to the heat of Italy than to the rigours of the French winter.

H1: Corporal, Francs-Tireurs de Châteaudun

Also known as the 'Francs-Tireurs Lipowski' after their commander, the unit particularly distinguished



General Aurelle de Paladines.

itself during the defence of this town on 18 October 1870. The uniform was adopted in Paris at the end of August, and is reminiscent of that of the Chasseurs à Pied, although it also included the American-style képi, which was so popular amongst irregular units during the war.

H2: Eclaireurs à Cheval Bretons, Army of the Loire, December 1870

This volunteer troop, numbering only two officers and 40 men, is typical of the small irregular cavalry units thrown up by the war. These groups generally chose for themselves names such as 'Chasseurs' or 'Francs-Tireurs', which well suited their attitude to dress, which was often casual in the extreme. Occasionally some would attempt to copy uniforms similar to those in the regular cavalry. One such unit, the 'Eclaireurs Franchetti', distinguished itself so much that it was given the right to wear the red trousers of the regular army.

H3: Franc-Tireur de Jonsac, Army of the Vosges

This small unit, only 25 strong, gives a good idea of the dress worn by the majority of the *francs-tireurs*, whether they were genuine mountain sharpshooters

or merely giving the impression of being such. In constant fear of attack the Germans often treated them as non-combatants, whether they had been recognised by the French authorities or not.

Farbtafeln

A1 Nicht-vorschriftsmäßiges, 'afrikanisches' Kepi mit Rangabzeichen eines Général de division. Siehe Pelisse, getragen als Jacke, typisch für diesen Winter, und die Interims-shabraque. A2 Diese kombinierte Einheit enthielt uniformierte Schwadronen des 2., 4., 6. und 7. Der grüne, gelb besetzte Dolman identifiziert einen Mann des 7. Siehe Feldzugausrüstung nach den Bestimmungen vom Juli 1870.

B1 Feldblusen von 1868 und frühere Habits waren zusammen 1870 zu sehen. Gürteltaschen waren im Feld mit rotem Leder gedeckt; Offiziere erhielten Geld, um Revolver zu kaufen – meist Lefauchaux, Colt oder Remington. B2 Ein Foto des heroischen Sergeanten Hoff deutet an, daß die Angehörigen der Regiments der marche manchmal eine Zahl und den Buchstaben 'M' auf dem Kepi trugen. Siehe fehlende Epauletten, dunkler als vorschriftsmäßige Mantelfarbe und fehlende Knöpfe an den Manschetten. B3 Gewöhnliche Soldatenmäntel wurden von vielen Offizieren getragen, besonders bei der Armee in Metz, weil praktischer und weniger auffallend; siehe tiefdunkel Goldstreifen des Obersten auf Manschetten und Kepi.

C1 Die 18 Bataillone des Pariser 75. Regiments waren entsprechend den Bestimmungen von Mai 1868 besonders gut ausgerüstet, wenn auch eine Sendung von Mänteln für den Wachdienst ohne Knöpfe eintraf, was zu seltsamen Experimenten führte. C2 Typische Offiziersmode in allen möglichen Einheiten; die Rangabzeichen an den Ärmeln in Form ungarischer Knoten waren kostspieliger, aber eleganter als die geraden Galons. C3 Die weniger glücklichen Einheiten der provinziellen Mobiles wurden von örtlichen Kaufleuten auf bescheidene Weise eingekleidet. Das vereinfachte Kepi von 1868 wird ohne Pompon oder Kokarde getragen; diese Einheit trug Remington-Gewehre.

D1 Die Uniformen variierten stark, aber im allgemeinen unterschied sich die Garde Nationale Mobilisée von der Garde Nationale Sédentaire nur durch bessere Waffen, meist Chassepots oder Remingtons. Kepi-Besatz, Hosenstreifen und andere Details sollten eher in Scharlach als in Garance sein. D2 Ein üblicher Uniformstil bei der Belagerung von Paris. Er trägt einen Artilleriesäbel von 1829. D3 Die Uniform wurde von den Departement-Präfekten entschieden, mit entsprechenden Variationen. Diese Einheit trug Perkussionsgewehre – M1842 oder 1867.

E1 Die Caban-Bluse, weißes Marinehemd und -kappe machte diese ausgezeichneten Truppen kenntlich, auch wenn sie in Infanteriemäntel oder Schaffelljacken gehüllt waren und standardmäßige Infanteriausrüstung trugen (abgesehen vom Gürtel). E2 Streng vorschriftsmäßige Felduniform für Pionieroffizier. E3 Wie bei sowiellen offiziell 'dunkelblauen' Uniformen war die der Kuriers des Generalstabs de facto schwarz. Nach September wurde die Czapka durch das Kepi ersetzt.

F1 Typisch elegante Uniform eines europäischen Offiziers einer afrikanischen Einheit, deren Männern und eingeborene Offiziere eine Art von arabisches Kostüm trugen. F2 So wie Infanteriuniform, abgesehen vom Stern am Kepi und blauen Kragenaufschlägen am Mantel; ebenso die einzigartigen Epauletten der Fremdenleion, stets im Feld getragen. Das 5. Bataillon, im Krieg in Frankreich aufgestellt, hatte die alten grünen Epauletten mit roten Halbmonden, und weiße 'Metall'-Aufschläge, inkl. einer 's' auf dem Kepi. F3 Vorschriftsmäßige Uniform von 1867, mit Merkmalen der Infanterie und der leichten Infanterie. Infanterie-Feldweibel trugen damals immer noch Gewehrausrüstung.

G1 Diese berühmten roten Uniformen der Revolutionäre von 10 Jahren zuvor wurden von den italienischen Freiwilligen beibehalten, die für Frankreich kämpften. Viele Offiziere trugen Dolmans mit Besatz. G2 Uniformen im Zouave-Stil von 1860 wurden von Offizieren und Mannschaften gleichermaßen getragen, die ersten aber in hellerer, blauerer Schattierung. G3 Die Uniformen der meisten Soldaten waren in Frankreich hergestellt, nach der Rückkehr der Einheit aus Italien; kümmerlich hergestellt aus grauem Stoff, waren sie für den Winter ungeeignet.

H1 Die Uniform erinnert an die Chasseurs à pied mit dem beliebten 'amerikanischen' Kepi; sie wurde Ende August bei dem angesehenen Korps 'Lipowski' eingeführt. H2 Solche winzigen, irregulären Einheiten trugen lässige Kleidung, die der Armeeuniform mehr oder weniger ähnelte, wenn auch manche die vorschriftsmäßigen Uniformen so eng nachahmten, als ihre Mittel dies gestatteten. H3 Typisch für solche kleinen, irregulären Banden, ob offiziell von den Franzosen anerkannt oder nicht.

Notes sur les planches en couler

A1 Distinctions 'africaines' de grade, non régimentaires, sur le képi, d'un général de division. Notez la pelisse portée comme une veste, caractéristique de cet hiver-là; et la shabraque de campagne, de petite tenue. A2 Cette unité mixte contenait des escadrons des 2nd, 4ème, 6ème et 7ème régiments qui portaient leur propre uniforme. Le dolman vert, à brandebourgs jaunes identifie un homme du 7ème régiment. Notez l'équipement de campagne conforme à l'ordonnance de juillet 1870.

B1 On vit ensemble en 1870 des tuniques de 1868 et des habits antérieurs. Les poches à cartouches étaient recouvertes de cuir rouge en campagne; et les officiers reçoivent des fonds pour acheter des revolvers – les Lefauchaux, Colt ou Remington étaient caractéristiques. B2 Une photographie de l'héroïque Sergent Hoff suggère que les régiments de marche portaient quelquefois un numéro et la lettre 'M' sur le képi. Notez l'absence d'épaulettes, la couleur du manteau plus sombre que celle réglementaire et le manque de boutons aux poignets. B3 De nombreux officiers adoptèrent les capotes des soldats ordinaires, en particulier ceux de l'armée à Metz, car elles étaient plus pratiques et moins voyantes; notez les cinq galons dorés de grade du colonel au poignet et sur le képi.

C1 Les 18 bataillons du 75ème Régiment parisien étaient particulièrement bien équipés selon les réglementations de mai 1868, bien qu'une distribution partielle de capotes d'infanterie pour le service de garde soit arrivée sans boutons, ce qui conduisit à utiliser de curieux expédients. C2 Une mode caractéristique pour les officiers de tous les genres de cette unité; les noeuds hongrois des tresses de grade sur les manches étaient plus onéreux mais aussi plus élégants que les galons droits. C3 Les unités moins favorisées des Gardes Mobiles provinciales étaient indifféremment par les marchands de la région. Le képi simplifié de 1868 se porte sans le pompon ou la cocarde; cette unité portait des fusils Remington.

D1 La qualité des uniformes variait énormément, mais celui de la Garde Nationale Mobilisée différait généralement de l'uniforme de la Garde Nationale Sédentaire par des armes supérieures, en général des Chassepots ou des Remington. Le passepoil du képi, les rayures des pantalons et d'autres détails étaient supposés être du couleur écarlate plutôt que garance. D2 Un style de tenue courant pendant le siège de Paris. Il porte un vieux sabre d'artillerie de 1829. D3 La tenue était décidée par les préfets départementaux, ce qui impliquait des variations. Cette unité avait des fusils de percussion, M1842 ou 1867.

E1 L'uniforme caban, chemise blanche de la Marine et béret de marin identifiaient ces belles troupes même lorsqu'elles se trouvaient emmitouffées dans les capotes de l'infanterie ou les vestes en peau de mouton, et (en dehors du ceinturon) elles portaient l'équipement standard de l'infanterie. E2 Tenue de campagne strictement réglementaire pour un officier du Génie. E3 Comme pour tant d'uniformes 'bleus foncés' officiellement, ces messagers de l'Etat-Major du Général portaient en fait un uniforme noir. Après septembre une ordonnance remplaça la czapka par un képi.

F1 Un uniforme à l'élégance caractéristique d'officier européen d'unités africaines, dont les hommes et les officiers natifs portaient une version du costume arabe. F2 Le même que l'uniforme de l'infanterie de ligne, sauf pour l'étoile du képi et les insignes de col bleues de la capote; et les épaulettes uniques à la Légion, toujours portées en campagne. Le 5ème Bataillon, une unité de temps de guerre recrutée en France, avait d'anciennes épaulettes vertes avec des croissants rouges seulement, et un insigne 'métallique' blanc portant le numéro '5' sur le képi. F3 Les réglementations de 1867 désignaient cet uniforme, avec ses caractéristiques pour l'infanterie de ligne et l'infanterie légère. Les adjudants continuaient à porter l'équipement de fusil à cette date.

G1 Les célèbres uniformes rouges des révolutionnaires datant de dix ans plus tôt avaient été conservés par les volontaires italiens combattant pour la France. De nombreux officiers utilisaient des dolmans à brandebourgs. G2 Les officiers comme les simples soldats portaient l'uniforme de même style que celui des Zouaves de 1860, mais les premiers dans un ton plus clair et plus bleu. G3 La plupart des uniformes des soldats avaient été confectionnés en France après le retour de cette unité d'Italie; de basse qualité et taillés dans un drap gris, ils ne convenaient pas pour l'hiver.

H1 Un uniforme rappelant celui des chasseurs à pied, avec le képi de style 'américain' fort populaire, fut adopté à la fin août par le corps de 'Lipowski' hautement respecté. H2 Ces minuscules unités irrégulières, à cheval, adoptaient une tenue décontractée, qui ressemblait plus ou moins à un uniforme militaire, bien que certaines aient imité le tenue réglementaire du mieux qu'elles l'aient pu. H3 Ils sont caractéristiques des petites troupes irrégulières, qu'elles aient été officiellement reconnues par les autorités françaises ou non.

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Avec annotations en français sur les
planches en couleur.
Mit Aufzeichnungen auf Deutsch über den
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ISBN 1-85532-135-1



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