

Incident near Badajoz

An introduction to Breakthrough rules for early 20th century games by Carl Luxford

This article is intended to help introduce you to an accompanying set of ‘home grown’ rules which I hope are in the style of the ‘back of a postcard’ (ok A4 size) or ‘one brain cell rules’. I am using a real event in 1936 as the basis for a gaming event to demonstrate the rules. I used 20mm figures and a games table that is 8 feet by 4 feet, but any scale could be used. (I suggest turning the use of inches in these rules into centimetres if using 10mm or smaller scale figures.)

HISTORICAL INCIDENT at Los Santos de Maimona
5th August, 1936

My sole historical source for this event is Paul Preston’s ‘The Spanish Holocaust’ book, my edition being paperback by Harper Press, from 2013, [ISBN 978-0-00-638695-7]. The action is briefly described on page 307:

“A large column of Republican militia led by professional army officers was sent from Badajoz in an effort to halt the Africanista advance. On 5th August, near Los Santos de Maimona, they mounted a desperate defensive action but were overwhelmed by the better trained, better armed, column of Asensio with its artillery and air support. To weigh the odds further disloyal army officers had disabled the Republican artillery pieces. The rebel columns suffered four dead; the defenders about 250.”

The gaming event is a ‘what if’ based on the idea the Republican guns are not sabotaged before the deserting officers go over to the side of the rebels, often now called the Nationalists.

From Preston’s description of the progress of this rebel column we know about what soldiers were present: there were Civil Guards, Falangists, Carlist Requettes, and Moroccan army contingents of both Legionarios and Islamic Moorish troops, the Regulares Indigenas [native regulars recruited in Morocco during the Spanish African Wars]. They were armed with rifles, medium machine guns and field artillery mainly, and supported by aircraft. They were ferried by civilian trucks and cars loaned by big landowners and other wealthy supporters of the uprising to protect Catholicism, larger private landed estates, and with sympathies to different ideologies like the royalist Carlists and the fascist Falangists: all united in their enmity for the Spanish Republic and its Radical - Liberal Government. This government was itself in strife with trade unionists and the anarcho-syndicalist and socialist political parties in Spain at the time; which were equally despised by the right of centre ideologies.

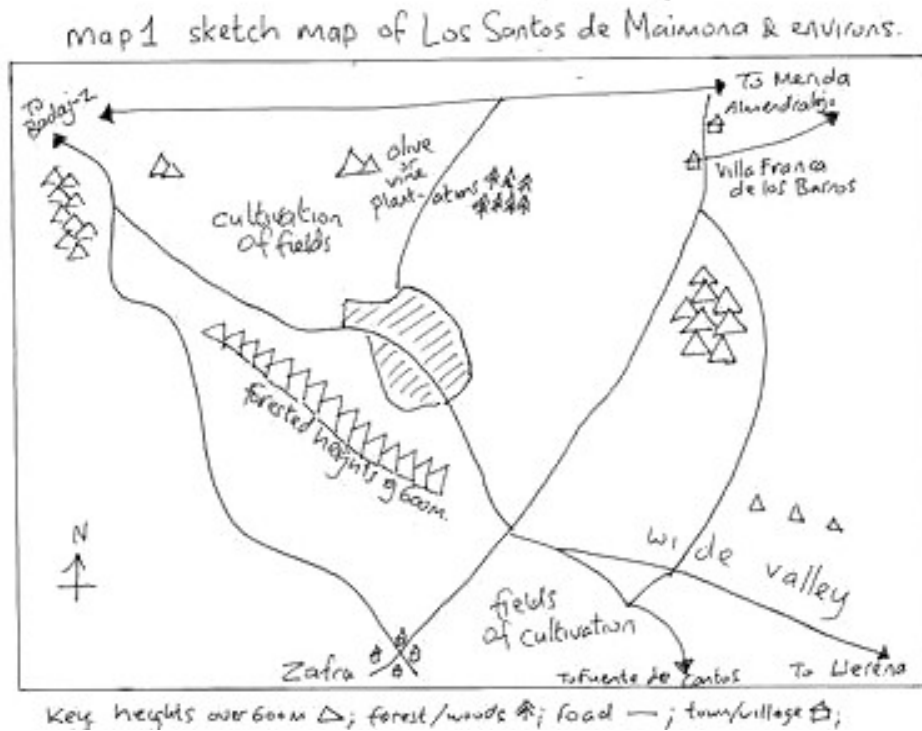
The Republican column seems to have drawn its manpower (and possibly woman power too as women also fought in defence of the Republic) from the militias, of the trade unions, which the unions had formed to defend the Republic. The Republic sometimes enjoyed much support from regular army, air, or naval units, as well as some civil guard and assault guard support. Although throughout the uprising these latter two and many army officers would prove disloyal to the Republic and desert to the rebels at the first opportunity. The Republican militias often drove to the front in cars and trucks that had been ‘conscripted’ in the towns were these militia formed although some militias were formed in rural areas from the landless labourers seeking to gain access to land that the Radical government had often promised them, but local elites often didn’t comply with Republican law.

Preston describes the imbalance of military power on page 312, when describing events around the town of Merida, that same year, as follows:

“The scratch Republican militia would fight desperately as long as they enjoyed the cover of buildings or trees. However they were not trained in elementary ground movements or even in the care and reloading of their weapons. Bunched near roads, seemingly unaware of better positions on nearby hill slopes, they made easy targets. The accumulated terror that accompanied the advance of the Moors and the Legionarios, a terror amplified after each victory, ensured that even the rumoured threat of being outflanked would send them fleeing, abandoning their equipment as they ran. John T. Whitaker of the New York Herald Tribune commented, ‘Marching with these Moors, I watched them flank, dislodge, and annihilate ten times their numbers in battle after battle. Individual heroism among untrained soldiers is not enough against professionals supported by aircraft.’ ”

In order to make the game event less one sided, the Republican forces will be given access to support from some regular elements of the army.

The map below is a sketch, based upon modern Google earth map of the area. I have not located where the historical encounter took place, so the map is there to illustrate the town of Los Santos de Maimona and its environment, and links to Badajoz by road. (I don’t know if all these roads or rail lines, shown on google earth, were present in a minor form in 1936.) It appears Los Santos de Maimona is a walled town and so I represented it on the table top as having some intact walls and some buildings built into or replacing the walls, and with four gateways, akin to Roman style of fort plan: all of which is artistic licence.



THE FORCES FOR THE GAME

Both forces will be of three brigades as follows. You may disagree with my classifications but that's okay, change what you disagree with.

Nationalists: CO. is Lieutenant-Colonel Carlos Cabanillas Asensio; (HQ: exceptional CR – command rating and radius).

Air support from (1 base) of Fiat CR32s (Italians incorporated into the Spanish Tercio de Extranjeros (Foreign Legion). [Scenario rule: Use 1D6 dice to decide which game turn it will arrive and another 1D6 to decide how many turns it will stay over the tabletop.] Armament for the CR32s counts as an MG for rules mechanics.

Brigade I Carlist Requette force with artillery support from out of date Africanista artillery

Number of bases	Troop type	Class
1	HQ Requette	Average CR
6	Rifles / Requette	2 nd
1	MG / Requette	n/a
2	Field guns 75mm / Moor	smoothbores
1	Ammo transport	Pack mules
2	Horse drawn limbers	n/a

Brigade II Legionarios, Tercio de Extranjeros (Foreign Legion).

Number of bases	Troop type	Class
1	HQ Falangist	Average CR
3	Rifles Legionarios	1 st class
2	MG Legionarios	1 st class
2	Field guns 75mm Regular army	1 st class
2	Horse drawn limbers	n/a
1	Hero Rifles / Legionarios	n/a
3	Rifles / Civil Guard	2 nd class
3	Rifles / Assault Guard	2 nd class
1	Hero / Civil Guard	n/a
1	Hero / Legionarios	n/a
1	Ammo transport	Pack mules

Brigade III Regulares Indigenas (Moors)

Number of bases	Troop type	Class
1	HQ Regulares Indigenas (Spanish officers)	Exceptional CR
9 (from 3 different units)	Rifles (Moors)	2 nd class
1	81mm Mortar (Moors)	2 nd class
1	MG (Moors)	n/a
1	Ammo transport	Pack mules
2	Heroes / Rifles (Moors) From 2 different Moor sub-units	n/a

NB these Heroes can only be used with their specific formations. They cannot be heroic for others.

Additionally four Civil Guard bases were placed in Los Santos de Maimona behind barricades erected to defend the main Church, and its two heroes, the local Priest and the local Sister of the holy orders. They were umpire controlled and were to take no action unless attacked.

Republicans: Commander unknown. Assume loyal Regular Army officer (Average CR)

Brigade I CNT Militia (Badajoz)

Number of bases	Troop type	Class
1	HQ CNT	Average CR
6	Rifles CNT militia	3 rd class
1	MG Regular Army	n/a
1	Field guns 75mm Regular Army	1 st class
1	Ammo transport	Pack mules
1	Horse drawn limbers	n/a
1	Hero / CNT 'commissar'	n/a

Brigade II CNT Militia (Badajoz)

Number of bases	Troop type	Class
1	HQ CNT	Average CR
6	Rifles CNT Militia	3 rd class
2	MGs Regular army	n/a
1	Field gun 76mm Regular army	1 st class
1	Horse drawn limbers	n/a
1	Hero / CNT (rifles)	n/a
1	Ammo transport	Pack mules

Brigade III Agrarian CNT Militia

Number of bases	Troop type	Class
1	HQ CNT	Average CR
6	Rifles (CNT peasant labourers)	3 rd class
1	76mm field gun (CNT gunners)	3 rd class
1	Horse drawn limbers	n/a
1	MG (CNT crew)	n/a
1	Ammo transport	Pack mules
1	Heroes / Rifles (CNT)	n/a

NB these Heroes can only be used with their specific formations. They cannot be heroic for others.

Additionally six bases of unarmed workers were placed behind hasty barricades defending the gates to Los Santos de Maimona itself: two bases at the SE and NW gates and one each at the smaller N and S gates. They were umpire controlled and were to take no action other than to deny access to Rebel troops by defending the gateways. They could be marched round by Republican forces but not given orders by them or their HQs.

BREAKTHROUGH RULES for early 20th century games

This scenario was written as an introduction to my simple rules for the interwar years - BREAKTHROUGH a copy of which can be found elsewhere in this issue and should be sufficient to play the game. Of Course you could use your own preferred rules like BKC, etc.

The next part of this article is a description of how the rules were used for this game as opposed to a description of the game itself which I shall briefly summarise later. The game was played on a tabletop layout summarised in **map2** and hopefully some photos will appear on the SOTCW forum when this article is published in the Journal. (I have the photos ready!)

The first thing to check is **how Brigade objectives are selected**: each Brigade must nominate one objective for itself on the table top. These should be drawn on maps by the players then simultaneously declared.

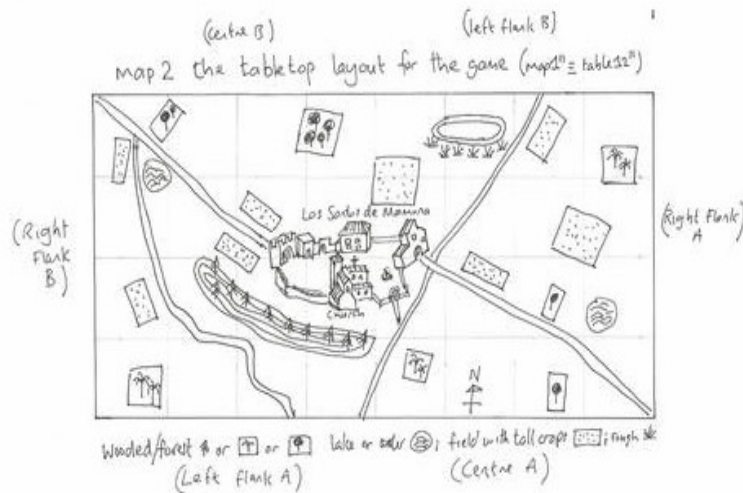
The Nationalists Brigade I [Carlist Requette force], targeted the hill north of Los Santos de Maimona, see map2. Their Brigade III [Regulares Indigenas] targeted seizing Los Santos de Maimona itself and signified this by placing objective marker over NW gateway. While Brigade II [Legionarios] targeted seizing the road from Zafra to Badajoz at the point where it reaches the western end of the high ridge south of the town of Los Santos de Maimona. (see map2)

The Republican Brigade I CNT Militia (Badajoz) targeted seizing and holding the hill north of Los Santos de Maimona, near its arrival point. Brigade II CNT Militia (Badajoz) targeted seizing Los Santos de Maimona itself and placed its objective marker over the SE gate of the town. Brigade III Agrarian CNT Militia targeted seizing the road to Zafra where it left tabletop south of Los Santos de Maimona.

Game length was set as ten moves, but it might be more realistic to set it by real playing time, (like 10pm) so you know at that point game adjudication will take place and a result declared.

Wind direction was thrown for (using a dice marked with arrows on five sides and o on the sixth side for windless conditions) and the result was wind blowing from SE to NW but this didn't feature in the game as neither army had gas or smoke capacity.

The Nationalist CO was exceptional and the Republican CO average so the Nationalist had a +1 advantage throughout the game in initiative rolls at phase 1 in the sequence of game turns.



There were no scenario throws for brigades being delayed (otherwise a simply D6 throw would have determined this per brigade). This could be built into every game so as to test the generalship of our players as units arrive piecemeal.

Next is to describe **how the Brigades arrived on the tabletop**. The rules employ the idea of arrival zones: for this scenario I turned the zones one step anticlockwise from that shown in the rules so **Right Flank A** replaced **Left Flank B** and so on round the tabletop. This was so the game event better mirrored the historical event and the likely approach marches of the Republican and Nationalist columns towards Los Santos de Maimona. Side **A** zones were the Nationalist arrival zones and side **B** zones the republican arrival zones.

The Nationalists won initiative (simple dice throws adding – or deducting - factor for generalship quality) and chose to move first. Next the Nationalist CO threw for which location each of his Brigades would arrive at on games table:

Brigade I Carlist Requette force, threw 5, and arrived in their right flank zone, off road.

Brigade II Legionarios, Tercio de Extranjeros (Foreign Legion) threw 4, and arrived in their central zone using the road from Llerena.

Brigade III Regulares Indigenas (Moors), threw 1 and arrived in their left zone, using the road from Zafra.

All were identified at this stage by their HQ base and four blank postcards, each 6x4 inches (and two of the four marked lightly with D for dummy placed face down), these could be in column or line formation and 2 represented the deployment / march area of the Brigade.

Next the Nationalists marched off HQs first, then using 9 inches per card (as no enemy yet on table to scout these

deployments and what they consisted of) as this speed further maximised deception as to location of any cavalry or armoured cars in their force. Neither player had any! Neither army had any scouts either to deploy at this stage: I assumed that Nationalist didn't deploy any due to overconfidence after their string of victories on the march, and that the Republican generals lacked faith in their raw recruits to let them go scouting and get lost.

It was now back to Republicans to repeat this process: the Republican Brigade I [CNT Militia (Badajoz)] dived for entry zone and arrived in their left flank zone opposite its objective. Brigade II [CNT Militia (Badajoz)] dice also gave it a left flank entry zone and an easy march up the Merida road to its objective. While Brigade III [Agrarian CNT Militia] arrived in the right flank zone, on the direct road from Badajoz to Los Santos de Maimona.

Next Republican HQs were moved towards their objectives (a compulsory aspect till some part of the Brigade is sitting astride its objective and in control range of its HQ) and brigade cards followed as had happened with the Nationalists so that Brigade strengths and exact dispositions would be concealed till spotted. (These dispositions could be recorded or simply deployed when spotted by enemy – when the Brigades bases **must deploy** on the space of its two non dummy cards.) The contents of these Brigade cards are not revealed till enemy come into sight of them (set at 36 inches to represent that its not easy to spot enemy in cultivated or rolling terrain). Using the narrow table I have it was not long before most enemy Brigades were spotted and dummy cards revealed as were Brigade dispositions.

One major idea behind these rules is that armies were moving between rigid line and column deployments to more flexible deployments but that army control required some rigidity as troops on the march cannot be

directed by static telephone lines. So formations tend to be bases touching one another in lines (or double lines) of attack or long marching column.

As Brigade HQs try to achieve their objective their forces will get spread out, perhaps artillery and machine guns left behind, laying down fire, as the main infantry force advances, and perhaps the Brigades infantry being given one or two directions of advance – so concentration for the blow on the objective or dispersal to attempt an outflanking.

The result will be some solid formations and some smaller deployments split off from the main brigade. This may sometimes cause confusion: but generally shooting and melee results should be applied to bases in groups.

Each base can usually perform two actions in a full turn: when their HQ has initiative they can move and when the opposing player has initiative they can shoot. However some actions will deny this like “Fix Bayonets!” and “Fix Gas Masks!” which both take up a whole turn.

This is for dramatic effect and represents a moment when the Brigade knows something dramatic is about to happen. Gas masks can be removed but bayonets stay fixed in the game once done: and only after the enemy is spotted. Neither task can be done by Brigades or bases who are in melee, or shaken, or in retreat or rout (latter two are effectively same process in this rule set). So some bases in a Brigade may be able to follow orders and others may not.

This part is emphasised by movement being done first by steady troops under command, then shaken troops testing then troops who are steady but out of command testing (which may be rare on a small games table or with small brigades).

Field artillery must unlimber to deploy (a move action) before firing, usually it must limber as a move action before moving off but on occasions of retreat or rout from melee it can move off as if limbering has taken place. Machine Guns are treated in the same way: it takes a move to deploy ready for firing and a move to dismantle except in emergency of retreat and rout.

Target priority is always the nearest enemy base except if it has gone to ground when another base can be targeted. HQs, scouts, and heroes (along with ammunition carriers) cannot be target priorities.

Rifles from the same group of bases can target the nearest enemy base and apply the effects to the whole group, as can MGs and Artillery. If targets are shaken and get a second shaken result then they lose a breakpoint of their group / base instead. Subsequent “go to ground results” or silenced results are ignored after the first takes effect on a base or group of bases.

Heroes can have a big impact on melee results as will be described below: in this game the Nationalist Brigade II Legionarios was saved several times from being routed / retreating from melee, by its heroes being attached

where the fighting was thickest, and taking hits for the Brigade, and surviving, either in place, or after being forced to retreat, and then later return to take further risks. Such action can turn a defeat into a draw and let the Brigade fight on, or turn a draw into a victory.

Generally the hit effectiveness table has the same effect in shooting and in melee save that in melee the “going to ground” result is ignored by foot and cavalry bases. Similarly troops in melee who become shaken ignore the need to rally until the melee itself ends in one side or other retreating. When troops get a retreat or rout result then this causes any gone to ground result to be overridden. Non shaken troops automatically rally if in command radius of their HQ at start of their move phase. However shaken troops always use the Standard Orders if shaken table to change their status: any result better than remain shaken will rally a group or base from rout, retreat or being shaken; while any result better than Rout will remove any retreating status but not its shaken status (in which case the unit can pivot to face enemy).

No base in long or wide edge contact in melee can be targeted in shooting phase. Units giving overlap support can be shot at, and any units forced to go to ground cannot continue to provide overlap support. Troops can shoot at those who charged them if facing enemy, and if charge came from distance they can target enemy at any point in that charge move when they could be seen moving, as can other troops who can see that target. If the charger gets a “go to ground” result he falls short of the melee target and no melee takes place; and any future shooting by the grounded charger and would be target takes place at the 0 range option. Troops who go to ground cannot initiate melee but can defend themselves in melee (at a disadvantage). Troops who have gone to ground can use movement phase to rise to their feet and move off or charge enemy.

Mortars are treated as howitzer guns of similar calibre in these rules. Mortars can fire either by direct line of sight or by using line of sight of Brigade HQ so long as the HQ is in command range of the mortar base(s).

No interpenetration movement is allowed unless gaps exist for troops to move through except those retreating and routers can burst through friends (making them shaken) but not through enemy.

If using fields as part of your terrain then treat these as limiting sight and movement, like woods, if tall crops. Soft cover like hedges, fences, crop fields give some morale benefits when defending cover in melee but no benefits from shooting.

HOW THE GAME PLAYED

Initially this was a two front battle game: the CNT agrarian labourers militia contacted the Nationalist Brigade II Legionarios early in the game which resulted in this Nationalist column never being able to find the space to usefully deploy and use its two artillery and two MG sun-units. While on the other flank the two CNT columns vied for use of the same road and delayed each other and were also quickly under attack from the

Nationalist Brigade I (Carlist Requette) causing part of Brigade II CNT Militia (Badajoz) to deploy to its flank while the rest marched off to seize Los Santos de Maimona. The latter only just arrived in time due to the advancing Brigade III Regulares Indigenas (Moors) facing a longer march from its arrival point. Had the Requette attacks not been repulsed repeatedly then it might have been a different story, but they were held off initially by rota of rifles from Brigade I and II CNT Militias and then by the Regular army gunners and MGs who set up on the hill overlooking the ground the Requettes attacked over. Something perhaps the historical Republican columns were incapable of doing in this early period according to John T. Whitaker's testimony noted earlier.

For the record the casualties in this game were: ie bases destroyed or captured (none actually routed off table but it was a close thing on occasion).

Nationalist:

Brigade I Carlist Requette force with artillery support from out of date Africanista artillery.

Number of bases lost	Troop type	Class
4	Rifles / Requette	2 nd

Brigade II Legionarios, Tercio de Extranjeros (Foreign Legion).

Number of bases lost	Troop type	Class
1	Hero Rifles / Legionarios	n/a
1	Rifles / Civil Guard	2 nd class
1	Hero / Legionarios	n/a

Brigade III Regulares Indigenas (Moors)

Number of bases lost	Troop type	Class
3 (from 2 different units)	Rifles (Moors)	2 nd class
1	MG (Moors)	n/a
1	Heroes / Rifles (Moors)	n/a

Also of note the aircraft attack got off three attacks before its guns jammed and it had to retire!

Republican:

Brigade I CNT Militia (Badajoz)

Number of bases	Troop type	Class
2	Rifles CNT militia	3 rd class

Brigade II CNT Militia (Badajoz)

Number of bases lost	Troop type	Class
2	Rifles CNT Militia	3 rd class
1	Hero / CNT (rifles)	n/a

Brigade III Agrarian CNT Militia

Number of bases lost	Troop type	Class
3	Rifles (CNT peasant labourers)	3 rd class
1	Ammo transport	Pack mules
1	Heroes / Rifles (CNT)	n/a

As you can see if we use the simple device (intended by the rules) of equating a rifle base to 200 men then the casualties were about 1600 Nationalist infantry and 1400 Republican infantry. Numbers much inflated by comparison to the real action: in part as the Republicans in the game were bolstered by regular artillery and MGs, and by the fact the tabletop forces of 3 brigades a side much inflated the real strength of these columns (although I don't have actual numbers to confirm this guess work).

It was a marginal victory (in the game) for the Republic, which seized and held the eastern end of Los Santos de Maimona, throwing back two assaults by the Moors, and also by holding the lesser heights to the north of the town overlooking the road to Merida (and indirectly Badajoz) where the Requettes were mauled by supporting artillery & MG fire from the heights by loyal Republican regular army gunners. The CNT agrarian labourers militia fought hard to deny the Nationalist Brigade II Legionarios control of the Zafra to Badajoz road which runs south and west of Los Santos de Maimona, but failed due the heroic efforts of the Nationalist hero characters who repeatedly took hits for their Brigade to deny the labourers melee victory time and again, but this delayed the Nationalist column on this flank. The end result was two to one, to the Republic, in terms of objectives held at end of the ten turns, albeit the Nationalist would claim that the town was only thinly held.

If nothing else I hope this encourages you to experiment with your own home grown rules and to try out 'what if' versions of historical events.

Carl Luxford
27/7/13

Postscript: use of markers on the tabletop

I know many players dislike the clutter of tabletop markers especially home grown ones like you will see in my photos, I can only plea that I intend to replace all by figure type markers like those advocated by 'Fire and Fury' (ACW) rules. My apologies that my ambitions have not caught up with my gaming practice!! For this game much use was made of the following type of paper markers:

Arty silenced	MG set up	Retreating
Arty deployed	MG jammed	Routing
Fix Bayonets	Gone to Ground	Low Ammo