

**THE CAMPAIGNS OF
NAPOLEON BONAPARTE
OF 1796-1797**

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NAPOLEON BONAPARTE—Born at Ajaccio, island of Corsica, August 15th, 1768; died on the island of Saint Helena, off the coast of Africa, May 5th, 1821. Student in military schools April 23rd, 1779 to 1785; second lieutenant 1785 to 1791; first lieutenant 1791 to 1792; general of brigade 1793; general of division and army commander 1795; consul and first consul 1799; first consul for life 1802; emperor 1804; abdicated 1814; reascended throne and abdicated 1815.

He entered the military school of Brienne, France, April 23rd, 1779, from which he passed to the military school of Paris, October 8th, 1783. Was graduated and assigned to the Artillery, September 1st, 1785. Entered artillery school of Valence, October, 1785, and remained until August 12th, 1786. Served with his regiment of La Fere, at Lyons and Douai until January, 1787, when he went to Corsica on leave. Returned to France and joined his regiment at Auxonne, May, 1788. In September, 1789, he returned to Corsica on leave. Rejoined his regiment at Auxonne, June, 1790, and remained with it until April, 1791, when he was, as first lieutenant, assigned to the artillery regiment of Grenoble, stationed at Valence. In October, 1791, he again visited Corsica on leave. Here he became adjutant and later lieutenant colonel of a volunteer battalion, but still held his rank in the regular army in which he became junior captain January 14th, 1792, and senior captain March 8th, 1793. He remained in Corsica until June, 1793, when he rejoined his regiment, then belonging to the Army of Italy, at Nice. Upon the revolt at Toulon, he went to Paris, asked for, and received from the Committee of Public Safety, the provisional command of the artillery of the besieging army, which he assumed September, 1793. On November 21st, he became by seniority, the junior major of his regiment, but after the fall of Toulon the representatives of the government with the army nominated him brigadier general, for his valuable services in the siege. He was confirmed January 7th, 1794.

He was assigned as Chief of Artillery of the Army of Italy, and the coast batteries from the Rhone to the Var. He remained with the Army of Italy until April, 1795, and planned operations by which that army advanced by successive steps from Nice to Savona. He went on leave in April, and during a reorganization of the army was placed on waiting orders. Having declined a brigade in the Army of the West he was, in September, 1795, attached to the War Department and assigned to that branch of the topographic department, which had charge of the preparation of plans of campaigns for the armies of the Alps and of Italy.

While on this duty, on October 5th, he was selected by General Barras as his second in command of the Army of the Interior to defend the central government against the attacks of the sections of Paris. His dispositions for meeting the attack were so skillful that the sections were easily repulsed. When Barras gave up the command of the Army of the Interior to become a member of the Directory, General Bonaparte was made general of division Oct. 20, 1795, and appointed commander in chief of that army.

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On February 23rd he was assigned to the command of the Army of Italy because of his service to the government in Paris, and because of the great strategic ability displayed in the memoirs he had prepared for the operations of the armies of the Alps and Italy.

The principal campaigns planned and directed by him in person were:

1. The campaign from April, 1796, to April, 1797, against first, the Austrian and Sardinian armies later, against the Austrian army. The principal battles of this campaign were those of *Montenotte*, *Dego*, *Millesimo*, *Mondovi*, *Lodi*, *Lonato*, *Castiglione*, *Bassano*, *Arcole* and *Rivoli*.

2. The campaign in Egypt from May, 1798, when he sailed with a corps of 30,000 men from Toulon, until October, 1799, when he returned to France with a few of his principal generals. He landed at *Alexandria*, occupied *Calro* and, with a division of 12,000, marched into Syria as far as *Acce*. He was unsuccessful in the siege of that town because his siege artillery sent by sea, was captured by the British fleet.

3. The campaign of 1800, against the Austrians, in which he personally directed the operations of the *Reserve Army*. He crossed the Alps over the *Great St. Bernard* pass in May, and in June defeated *General Melas*, in the decisive battle of *Marengo*. After this he turned over the command of the army to *Massena*.

4. The campaign from August to December, 1805, against the Austrians and Russians; in this he commanded the Grand Army, organized in 1803 and 1804. He crossed the *Rhine* toward the end of September and a month later forced the surrender of the Austrian army, under *General Mack*, at *Ulm*. He then moved through Vienna into Moravia and defeated the combined Austro-Russian army in the decisive battle of *Austerlitz*, December 2nd.

5. The campaign of 1806 against the Prussians. The Grand Army, which had been encamped in the South German states, was concentrated in northern Bavaria about the 1st of October and on the 14th decisively defeated the Prussians in the battles of *Jena* and *Auerstadt*. Napoleon commanded in the former, and *Davout* in the latter. He then moved rapidly on Berlin and cut off the retreat of all the Prussians, west of the Oder river.

6. The campaign of 1806-1807 against the Russians. After the destruction of the Prussian army, he advanced to the *Vistula* to seek the Russians. In the vicinity of Warsaw he fought the indecisive battles of *Pultusk* and *Golymin*, about the last of December, 1806. The war was then transferred to East Prussia, where he fought the indecisive battle of *Eylau* in February, 1807. Finally, in June, 1807, he defeated the Russian general, *Benning* in the decisive battle of *Friedland*.

The war in Spain and Portugal, which followed, lasted from November, 1807, when *Marshal Junot* marched across the mountains to Lisbon, until the spring of 1814 when Wellington crossed the frontier near Bayonne, about the time Paris was captured by the allies. In this war, which absorbed a large part of the Grand Army, Napoleon was in the field but a short time, from November, 1808, to January, 1809. His operations were successful, but not decisive. During the remainder of the time the operations were conducted by his principal marshals, *Massena, Marmont, Ney* and *Soult*.

7. The campaign of 1809 against Austria. He defeated Archduke Charles at *Eckmuhl* near *Ratisbon* in April, captured that town and then moved along the south bank of the Danube to Vienna. In this vicinity he forced a crossing at the island of *Lobau* and fought the battle of *Aspern*, or *Essling*, May 22nd. Too weak to advance, he retired to his island, and awaited reinforcements. In July he again crossed in face of the enemy and won the decisive battle of *Wagram*, followed by that of *Znaim*.

8. The campaign of 1812 against Russia. For this campaign, he assembled an army of 450,000 men, of whom about one-half were *French*, and the remainder contingents from *Austria, Prussia, Saxony, Italy* and the smaller *German* states. His front of operations, at the beginning of hostilities, extended from *Riga* on the north to *Galicia* on the south, a distance of 400 miles. At the termination of his advance movement, his center had advanced to *Moscow*, 600 miles from the *Prussian* frontier. He crossed the *Nieman* river with his main body in the vicinity of *Kovno*, June 24th, and reached *Moscow* on September 15th, successfully, but not decisively, defeating the Russians at *Smolensk* and at *Borodino*. His army was now scattered over an immense territory; about 90,000 were at *Moscow*; 30,000 *Prussians* near the mouth of the *Dwina* river; 50,000 *Austrians* and *Saxons* in *Poland* and the remainder of his army between these corps and *Moscow*. His whole army had been largely diminished in strength by the difficulty of supplying it in a country, which was sparsely inhabited and traversed only by very poor roads. After remaining in *Moscow* a month, he was obliged to retreat before the winter weather rendered the roads absolutely impassable. The famous retreat began about the 20th of October, and early in November severe winter weather set in. Without provisions or suitable clothing, harassed by the Russians, and suffering from the inclement weather, the army was rapidly transformed into a mob of fugitives without formation or discipline. As the horses were the first to suffer from the famine, the troopers soon joined their companions on foot and the gunners abandoned their pieces. When the army at last reached the *Nieman*, there was only a rear guard of about 5,000 men, over half of whom were officers, under arms to check the pursuit. The Russians had, however, suffered nearly as much as the French from the weather and lack of supplies and were in no condition to pursue farther.

9. The campaign of 1813 against the allies. As a result of 1812, the Prussians allied themselves with the Russians, who invaded East Prussia, while the remnant of the French army gathered its detachments in Germany and retired to Magdeburg. Napoleon raised a new army in France and marched through south Germany to Dresden winning en route the battles of *Weissenfels* and *Gros Gerschen*. In the spring the allied army had approached the Elbe, but was forced by Napoleon to the Oder after its defeat at *Bautzen*; an armistice followed. In August, when hostilities were renewed, Austria and Sweden joined the allies. In September Napoleon defeated the allies in the indecisive battle of *Dresden*, but was himself decisively defeated by the allies in October at *Leipsic* and compelled to fall back to the Rhine. In this campaign he was much embarrassed by the action of his Saxon and other allies, who deserted him at critical moments.

10. The campaign of 1814, for the defense of France. About the 1st of January the allies were moving upon Paris with three armies. The southern army moved from Belfort and Strasburg; the central one from the vicinity of Metz and the northern one through Holland. The left and center were the main armies and were to unite along the line *Chalons-Troyes* and together advance on Paris. These armies numbered together about 200,000, that in Holland 60,000, while Napoleon had but 100,000 all told. By maneuvering in the space between the *Aisne* and *Seine* rivers, between Paris and Chalons, he succeeded in separating and checking the center and left columns of the allies until reinforced by the right. His thin line was finally broken and Paris capitulated March 29th. A week later he abdicated. The principal battles of this campaign were *Brienne*, *Rothiere*, *Champaubert*, *Montmirail*, *Vauchamps*, *Etoges*, *Mormont*, *Montereau*, *Craonne*, *Laon*, *Champenoise*, and *Montmartre*.

11. The campaign of 1815 in Belgium. Napoleon returned from Elba March 20th, 1815, and by June had organized an army of 200,000 men. The allies organized an army of 220,000 men in Belgium; of whom 100,000 were commanded by *Wellington* and the remainder by *Blucher*; 150,000 on the middle Rhine; 230,000 on the upper Rhine; and 60,000 on the Sardinian frontier. Napoleon concentrated an army of 120,000 in northeastern France to operate against Wellington and Blucher, and divided his other forces into small corps to act defensively against the heads of the other columns. About the beginning of June he marched against *Wellington* and *Blucher*, who were separated, to get in between them and defeat them in detail. He was at first successful at *Quatre Bras* and *Ligny* and compelled them to retreat on what he believed were divergent lines. He pursued Wellington with his main body and found him in a strong defensive position at *Waterloo*. He attacked him, and had gained but little success, when the approach of the Prussians on his flank turned what might have been an indecisive battle into a decisive defeat and rout. Unknown to Napo-

leon, *Blucher* had retreated along a line which led towards *Waterloo* and was thus able to assist *Wellington*, while the force sent by Napoleon in pursuit of *Blucher*, never reached the field. This battle ended Napoleon's military career.

Napoleon abdicated a second time June 21st and shortly thereafter surrendered to the British fleet. He was sent by the British to Saint Helena, where he died.

Until he became emperor, May, 1804, he was known as and signed himself, *Bonaparte*; after that he was known as, and signed himself, *Napoleon*.