THE BRITISH CAMPAIGNS IN THE PENINSULA 1808 - 1814

★

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This vivid sketch of Wellington as he appeared in 1812 was done by the famous Spanish painter, Francisco Goya y Lucientes, and according to a note which was appended to the drawing by a member of Goya's family, was executed on the night following the victory of Salamanca. The original is now in the British Museum, and is reproduced by permission.

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Maps drawn by
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The Background of the War

Revolution and Reaction

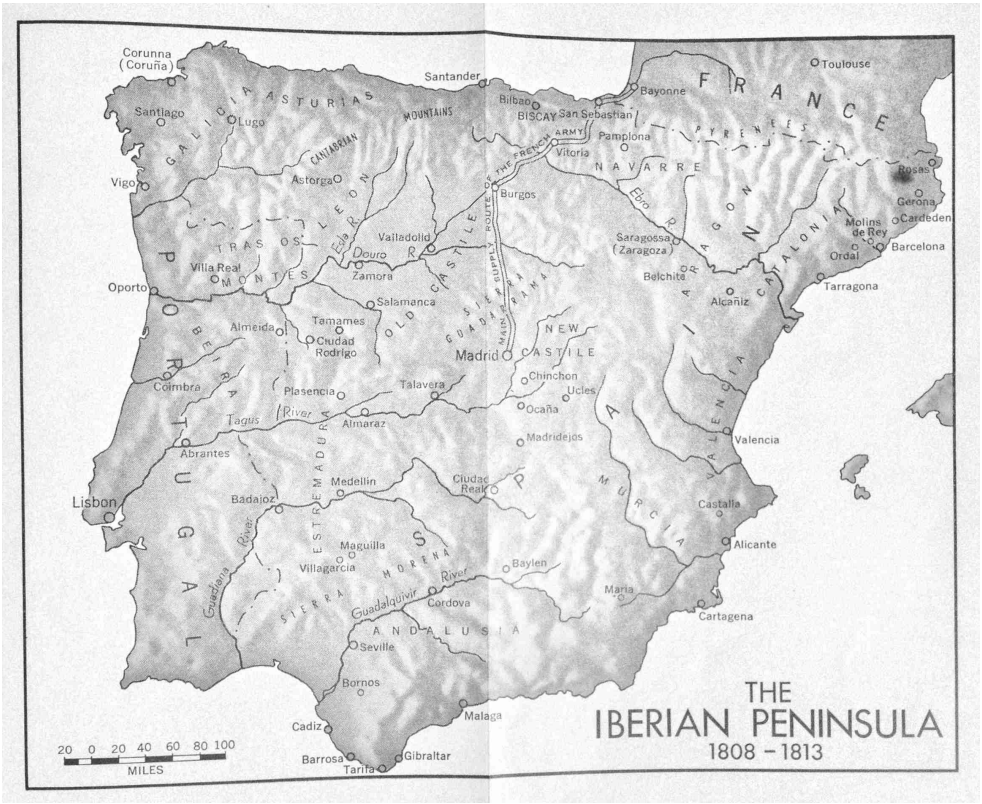
On 14 July 1789, a Paris mob stormed and took the Bastille. This act of violence marked the beginning of a long convulsion which for more than a quarter of a century was to shake Europe with the clangour of arms. Before the passions which were unleashed that day had spent themselves, tremendous political and social changes were to be effected, the deep roots of feudalism were to be torn up from the soil of Western Europe, the entire practice of warfare was to be revolutionized, and the world was to enter that new, nationalistic epoch of which we today are the bewildered and reluctant heirs.

From the outset the new republic felt itself to be in opposition to the encircling kings. The revolutionary leaders considered that their political beliefs were universally applicable, and consequently they were as intransigent and aggressive as doctrinaire fanatics usually are. Typical of the spirit of the times was the tempestuous, lion-headed Danton who, when the armies of the monarchies began to close in upon the French frontiers, thundered that "we will throw down at their feet, as a gage of battle, the head of a king".

The ruling houses of Europe, for their part, were urged to war by considerations of blood relationship and sympathy with the French monarchy, by religious sentiment, by class loyalties, and above all else by the desperate instinct of self-preservation. They were beaten time and time again, separately and in combination. Between 1789 and 1815 the French stabled their horses in every major capital of Europe and the sound of French guns shook every throne on the continent, but the kings would make no permanent peace with the new order, whether it was headed by Convention, or Directory, or Emperor.

In this intransigence the legitimate monarchies were strengthened and upheld by the relentless anti-French policy of successive Tory governments in England. The September massacres in 1792, the institution of the Terror, and the execution of Louis XVI in January of 1793 succeeded in estranging even the revolution's warmest sympathizers in England. The British nation was thus united in those sentiments of moral indignation so useful to a

government which is about to declare war for reasons of expediency. To Pitt, the autocratic Prime Minister, far more valid considerations were certainly the dangers to Britain implicit in the French annexation of Belgium and the economic disadvantage to be apprehended from the French declaration that the River Scheldt, which had been closed by treaty to foreign commerce since 1648, would henceforth be open to navigation. The merchants of the City of London feared the commercial rivalry of Antwerp just as the statesmen of Westminster dreaded any alteration in the balance of power on the continent. Moreover, when the French offered in November 1792 to assist oppressed peoples everywhere to gain their independence, this was rightly regarded as a threat to the continued British domination of Ireland. Except for one year of uneasy peace between March 1802 and May 1803, British money, British naval power, and British armies were consistently used to bring about the defeat of the new France. This purpose was finally achieved on the field of Waterloo, where, with an appropriateness unusual in history, Napoleon received his *coup de grâce* from a British general whom he had never before encountered in battle but who, more perhaps than any other single man, was responsible for his downfall.



But when Britain first entered the war, Napoleon was still only an unknown officer of artillery. By 1793 the most extreme and doctrinaire elements of the National Convention were directing French policy. The men of the Mountain had been saved for their destiny by the victory which Dumouriez and Kellermann had won over the Duke of Brunswick at Valmy and by the fact that Russia, Prussia, and Austria, having gorged on the dismembered body of Poland, required time to digest their meal. During this period France herself was full of restless violence and wild oratory, yet the war did not open auspiciously for England and her allies. In 1793 and 1794 the revolutionary energies of the Jacobins seemed to brush all opposition aside. Counter-revolution was suppressed in France; Toulon was recaptured (and Napoleon Bonaparte made his mark in the fighting); and both the Austrians and a British army under the Duke of York were defeated in Flanders (to the disgust of Lt.-Col. Arthur Wellesley who commanded a regiment in that ill-conducted campaign). To make matters worse, Pitt sent a British expeditionary force to the West Indies instead of to France, and in three years time the British Army had lost 80,000 men in those fever-ridden

islands, fighting, not against the French, but against a revolt of negro slaves who had been encouraged by French revolutionary ideas to strike for freedom and racial equality.[1]

The Rise of Napoleon

Meanwhile in France the first violence of the revolution had run its course. Robespierre was dragged to the guillotine, and the Directory ruled instead of the Jacobins. In October of 1795 a conservative attempt to overthrow the Directors was broken when the army used its guns to clear the streets of Paris. As a reward, the officer who had quelled the uprising, now promoted to be General Bonaparte, was given command of the French armies which were fighting against the forces of the Austrian Emperor in Italy. The Italian campaign clearly established Napoleon's genius. Victories like those at Lodi, Arcola and Rivoli fixed his ascendancy over the army and made him the idol of the people of France. When he returned as a conquering hero in 1798, the jealous Directors were glad enough to speed him on his way to Egypt.

By this time only Britain and Austria persisted in the war, and neither of the allies pressed very hard. In England the industrial revolution had caused widespread distress; taxes were heavy; the war was unpopular; the king was mad, and the government unrepresentative; while in Ireland a popular rebellion was only suppressed to the accompaniment of much bloodshed. Moreover, the French navy, formidably augmented by the fleets of Holland and Spain, forced British shipping to abandon the Mediterranean. This depressing naval situation was somewhat improved when in February of 1797 Sir John Jervis and Nelson destroyed the Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent, but shortly afterwards the Royal Navy mutinied twice in three months, at Spithead and at the Nore. Nevertheless, the ringleaders had hardly been hanged when the British Admiral Duncan defeated the Dutch fleet at Camperdown, and ten months later, in August of 1798, Nelson destroyed a French fleet at the Battle of the Nile.

Napoleon, however, managed to slip back from Egypt to France, leaving his army behind him, and by the *coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire,[2] he overthrew the Directory and became First Consul. The next few years marked the peak of the Napoleonic achievement and revealed unmistakably the weakness of the *anciens régimes*, but in these years too the French Revolution began to harden into autocracy. In 1800 Napoleon was elected First Consul for a ten year period; in 1802 he was elected First Consul for life; and in 1804 the wheel came full circle when in Notre Dame Cathedral,

in the presence of the Pope, Napoleon with his own hands crowned himself Emperor of the French. Some of the French Army's revolutionary *élan* may have been diminished by these events, but what was more serious, the Republican Minister of War, Carnot, who in the brave days of Valmy had only "to stamp his foot for armies to spring out of the earth", refused all office and took no more part in public affairs until 1813. This was a real loss, for Carnot's military genius was in many ways complementary to Napoleon's, but Carnot, like Trotsky after him, felt that the revolution had been betrayed and—again like Trotsky—he was never able to put into effect his intended military reforms.

Thanks to British sea-power, the British Isles themselves were saved from invasion, but there was little else in which the Pitt ministry could find cause for satisfaction. Sea-power, indeed, was at this time Britain's salvation. The battle of Trafalgar in 1805 established Britain's naval dominance and this verdict was only confirmed by Canning's seizure of the neutral Danish fleet at Copenhagen in 1807.

Yet even such victories were cold comfort. Napoleon meanwhile was subduing the continent. He took the armies which Carnot had raised for the revolution and handled them with a sureness and skill, a speed and ferocity which the world had not seen before. The legend of Napoleonic invincibility came to be believed not only by the French but also by the continental armies, and the genius of the Emperor was greatly assisted by the awe of his foes. There was, in truth, much reason for awe, as Marengo, Ulm, Austerlitz, Jena, and Friedland proved.

Austria had retired from the struggle after Austerlitz; Prussia had been compelled to make peace after Jena; and when in June of 1807 Napoleon heavily defeated the Russians at Friedland, there was no more opposition on the continent. England, however, remained unreconciled, and the French Emperor determined to bring her to terms by means of an economic blockade. The plan for this had been promulgated in November, 1806, in Berlin. Essentially it was Napoleon's intention to close all the ports of Europe to British shipping. Although the blockade undoubtedly caused much hardship in Britain, this Continental System, as it was called, had other far-reaching consequences which on the whole were detrimental to France. It aroused the hostility of Europe; it drew Napoleon into renewed campaigns to enforce his decrees; and it provided the opening by which a British Army was introduced into the continent.

The French Invasion of the Peninsula

In the early part of the 19th century Europe was not conspicuously fortunate in her monarchs. Frederick William III of Prussia was cowardly and treacherous; the Tsar Paul of Russia had been mad and his successor, Alexander I, was unstable; the Emperor Francis of Austria was weak and vacillating. But all of these were shining examples of royal excellence as compared with the Spanish Bourbons. King Charles, pliant, stupid, and irresponsible, lived in a state of lively enmity with his miserable son, Ferdinand, while the Queen, Marie Louise, was notoriously more interested in the handsome officers of the palace guard than in the affairs of the kingdom. The Queen's former lover, Prince Godoy, was the real ruler of Spain, and Godoy was so little in touch with political reality that, when Prussia took the field against Napoleon before Jena, he mobilized the Spanish Army.

Napoleon's counter to this piece of foolishness was a subtle one. For some time Portugal had been the only loophole in the Continental System. British goods were finding their way into Europe through Portuguese ports and British fleets found frequent shelter in Portuguese harbours. Napoleon therefore compelled Spain to sign a treaty whereby she agreed to join with France in an attack on Portugal, permitting French troops to cross Spanish territory and allowing for a further reinforcement of 40,000 men to enter Spain if the British should attempt to relieve Lisbon.

On the last day of November, 1807, General Junot, at the head of a weary, ragged army, entered Lisbon just too late to intercept the Portuguese fleet which had sailed for Brazil a few hours earlier. Napoleon, however, was not content with this. In February of 1808 he sent into Spain double the number of troops allowed under the treaty, captured the frontier fortresses by stratagem, and sent Marshal Murat marching on Madrid. King Charles abdicated in favour of Ferdinand, but nothing could now have saved the Bourbons short of a courageous defence, and this was the last expedient which would have occurred to any member of the Spanish Court. In the spring of 1808 the entire royal family, together with Godoy, were lured to Bayonne in France where they were persuaded to abandon all claim to the Spanish throne. Napoleon thereupon appointed his brother Joseph King of Spain.

Spanish Insurrection

In this the French Emperor had reckoned without the Spanish people. When on 2 May word of Napoleon's design was brought to Madrid by a Navarrese who had escaped from Bayonne in disguise and made his way

south over the high mountains, an angry mob at once assembled outside the royal palace, and Murat was forced to call out a French battalion to clear the square. However, the sound of musket-fire, instead of cowing the inhabitants of Madrid, brought them into the streets in full force. All that afternoon the fighting continued. Everywhere throughout the city isolated groups of French soldiers were murdered. The palace was furiously attacked. A few hundred citizens seized the artillery park and held it against repeated French assaults until all of the defenders were killed. Only by pouring in troops from outside the city was Murat able to regain control.

There was worse to follow. Within a few weeks the insurrection had spread throughout all Spain, spontaneous, ferocious, and leaderless. The tiny province of Asturias was so little impressed with the Napoleonic legend that it declared formal war on France, raised an army of 18,000 men, and dispatched envoys to London to ask for help. One after the other the remaining Spanish provinces followed suit. Galicia, Leon, Aragon, Valencia, Catalonia, Murcia, and Andalusia were all in revolt by the middle of June. When Joseph Bonaparte arrived in Madrid to take over his new throne, the French held only that portion of Spanish territory which they could cover by fire.

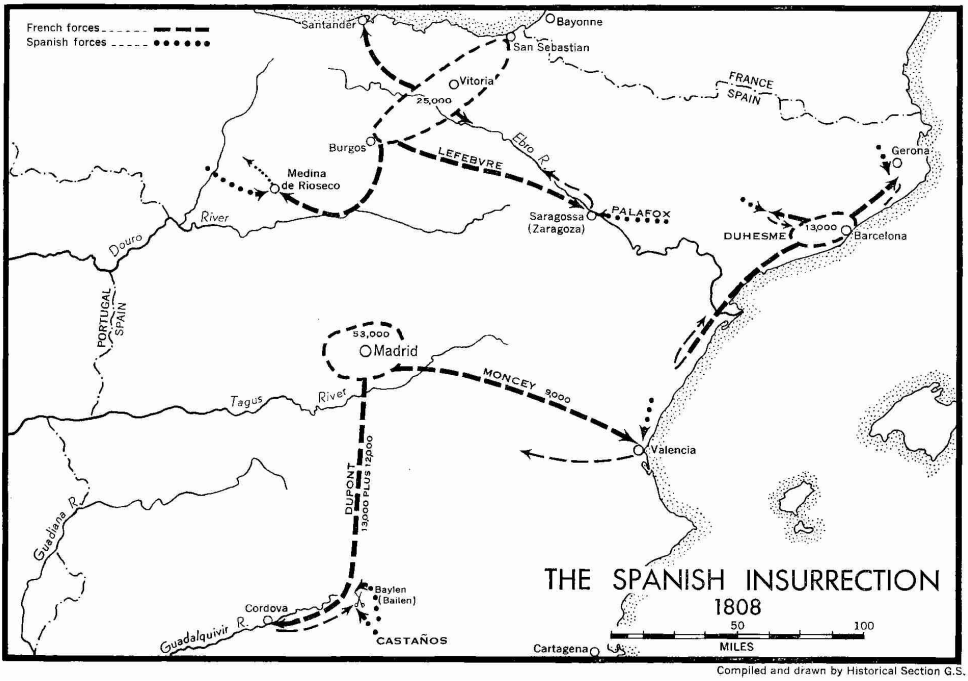
The summer of 1808 brought Napoleon the first serious check of his career. More than that, and ultimately of far greater importance, the Spaniards by their resistance set an example which was later to be followed by the Germans and the Russians with deadly effect. Yet when the Spanish people rose in arms, Napoleon had some 91,000 men in Spain as well as his troops under Junot in Portugal. The French in Spain were deployed as follows: 53,000 in the vicinity of Madrid, 25,000 guarding the lines of communication between San Sebastian and Burgos, and 13,000 in Catalonia. [3]

Napoleon did not at first take the Spanish insurrection seriously. He was used to dealing with people of different metal, and he believed that a rapid series of brisk little actions in various parts of the country would suffice to quell the revolt, just as had formerly been the case in Italy and the Germanies. By an advance to the south he intended to subdue that portion of the country and prevent foreign aid reaching the rebels through the port of Cadiz, while by a move to the east he planned to secure the Mediterranean seaboard and especially the naval arsenal at Cartagena. The achievement of these objects, he believed, would bring about the general collapse of the rebellion. He therefore ordered General Dupont to march with 13,000 troops to Cordova and Seville in the south. At the same time old Marshal Moncey

was to be sent with 9000 from Madrid to Valencia, while Duhesme, marching from Barcelona, was ordered to converge on that city from the north; and Marshal Bessières, guarding the lines of communication, was to send Lefebvre-Desnouettes with 4000 men against Saragossa and dispatch a detached brigade to Santander.

But the Iberian Peninsula is not like the rest of Western Europe. The traveller who crosses into Spain from France at once finds himself in a totally different countryside. Green fields and fertile valleys are left behind and he is faced instead with a landscape of high mountains and bleak, wind-swept plateaux where swift rivers surge through rocky outcrops to the sea. It is a harsh land where the soil is baked hard by the blazing sun and where the vegetation is stunted and poor. In Spain the worst features of all the seasons appear in exaggerated form. The summers are dry and hot; the winters are bitterly cold; the springs and autumns are full of torrential rains. There is much truth in the saying that "Africa begins at the Pyrenees".

From the point of view of an invader from the north, Spain has even more formidable features. Most of the great mountain ranges and major rivers run from west to east across his path, yet even lateral communications are necessarily roundabout and difficult since the country is divided by its branching mountains into isolated districts. In Napoleon's time the roads were few and poor, and many of them were impassable for artillery in the rainy season or in the wintertime. During all the period of the French occupation of Spain the invaders were dependent for their communications upon the one great road which ran from Bayonne through San Sebastian, Vitoria, and Burgos to Madrid. Moreover, the agricultural production of Spain was so close to the subsistence level that the French practice of "living off the country" was extremely difficult. In fact it could only be achieved at all at the cost of a degree of dispersion which gravely hindered military operations. Added to these natural obstacles, and partly no doubt caused by their influence, was the fierce and proud temper of the Spanish people who proved as harsh and as uncompromising as the Spanish landscape. Napoleon's armies were soon to learn the truth of the comment which had been made nearly three centuries before by King Henry IV of France: "Spain is a country where small armies get beaten and large ones starve".[4]



For the French, therefore, nothing went as planned. Moncey assaulted Valencia at the end of June, but was beaten back with heavy loss and was only able to escape to Madrid by virtue of extraordinary good luck and because of the rawness of the Spanish irregulars opposing him. Dupont got to Cordova without serious opposition and wantonly sacked the town. (His troops were completely out of hand for twenty-four hours.) But while there, the entire countryside rose against him; French outposts all along his lines of communication were attacked; and he found himself completely isolated. Murat's ruthlessness in Madrid and Dupont's sack of Cordova now proved to have been serious mistakes. The Spanish fought as though they were possessed of devils. There were no rules of war and no non-combatants as far as the guerrillas were concerned. Every Frenchman who fell into Spanish hands, including the sick and wounded, was meted out the same drastic treatment. Some were blinded; some were boiled alive; some were sawn in half; those who were more fortunate were merely killed. The French, for the first time, had encountered real guerrilla warfare, and they did not relish it. Dupont, losing his nerve, fell back from Cordova, but his force was attacked at Baylen in mid-July and 18,000 soldiers of the Grand Army shamefully laid down their arms and surrendered to a band of half-trained Spaniards. The military loss was not a significant one, but the moral damage to the Napoleonic legend was incalculable.

Meanwhile Lefebvre assaulted the city of Saragossa only to be heavily repulsed by the defenders under José Palafox, and when General Verdier replaced Lefebvre in the command he was no more successful. Three times in all the French were beaten back with heavy loss before Verdier, destroying his guns and ammunition, scuttled back to Burgos with a thoroughly demoralized force. In Catalonia Duhesme's column fared no better. This force of 4000 was caught in the mountain defiles, heavily defeated, and forced back onto the plains more a mob than an organized body of troops. Duhesme thereupon collected 6000 men and attempted to storm Gerona, only to be beaten back three times. In August the siege of Gerona was renewed with 13,000 Frenchmen, but the outcome was the same, and Duhesme retired the second time on Barcelona. The only bright spot for the French in this terrible summer was the defeat of the Spanish generals Cuesta and Blake by Marshal Bessières at Medina de Rioseco. Yet not even this victory, complete as it was, could convince King Joseph that he was safe in Madrid. He fled from his capital in August, taking the main body of the French Army with him, and sought safety north of the Ebro.

The first phase of the fighting in the Peninsula was over for the time being. Contrary to all expectations, the Spanish undeniably had been the victors, and they had achieved this, moreover, entirely by themselves. They paid heavily for their success, it is true, but it should also be remembered that during the memorable summer of 1808 the Spaniards inflicted upon the French some 40,000 casualties—a number almost equal to that which the British were to inflict in the next six years of regular warfare.[5]

The British Decide to Intervene

The deputies whom Asturias had sent to Britain at the outbreak of the insurrection were only the first of a series of Spanish delegations to London. After the desertion of the Spanish monarchy, there was no central government in that unfortunate country and, as a consequence, each of the provinces elected its own provincial council, or *junta*. Most of these sent their representatives to England to plead the Spanish cause and to seek help from Napoleon's most steadfast enemy. The British Government from the first was inclined to look favourably on the Spanish requests, and there were a number of considerations which weighed heavily in favour of the decision to intervene in the Peninsula. As a result of Castlereagh's efforts at the War Office, the British Army was now larger and better equipped than at any previous time in its history. The danger of an invasion of the British Isles had passed away at Trafalgar and Napoleon had long since abandoned his great camp at Boulogne. And in spite of the failure of various foolish

military ventures, the British Cabinet was still anxious to find a theatre where British soldiers could be engaged profitably against France.

At the time of the Spanish insurrection yet another British expedition was in the planning stage. Lieut.-General Sir Arthur Wellesley, who had gained some reputation in India by his defeat of the Mahrattas, was preparing a force to be used against the Spanish colonists in Venezuela. When he heard of the events in the Peninsula, however, Wellesley wrote a memorandum, which was considered by the British Cabinet, recommending that the force destined for South America should be diverted to Spain.

He pointed out that, if the Spanish people were really wholehearted in their effort against Napoleon, ". . . this would appear to be a crisis in which a great effort might be made with advantage; and it is certain that any measures which can distress the French in Spain must oblige them to delay for a season the execution of their plans upon Turkey, or to withdraw their armies from the north".[6] Wellesley further argued that the French Armies were spread over all Europe and that each of them had definite tasks to perform which could not be neglected without impairment to the Emperor's grand design. From this modest conception, which aimed at no more than the embarrassment of the enemy, there was to grow the "Spanish ulcer", a malady which contributed in no small measure to Napoleon's ultimate downfall.

The British Ministers were flatteringly receptive to Wellesley's suggestion, the more so, no doubt, since they had already been thinking along the same lines themselves. Wellesley, moreover, was a political favourite. His elder brother, Richard, was soon to be in the Cabinet and he himself held the post of Chief Secretary for Ireland. An additional factor in the adoption of Wellesley's plan was the fact that the only other British general of proven competence, Sir John Moore, was suspected of Whiggish tendencies. Canning at least was anxious that Moore's reputation should be overshadowed by someone who was politically more acceptable. Therefore, on 14 June 1808, Sir Arthur Wellesley was appointed to command the expedition to Spain.

Not unreasonably, the Horse Guards, the headquarters of the Army in London, objected that Wellesley's appointment to the command of such a force was an affront to a number of generals who were senior to him on the Army List, and notably to Moore. In this they were supported by the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of York, but the Cabinet nevertheless had its way. Accordingly, on 13 July a British force of some 10,500 under

Wellesley's command sailed from Cork on its way to Corunna, a new theatre of war, and the favourable notice of history.

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[1] The Hon. J. W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, IV, Part I, (London, 1915), 496.

[2] One of the most typical extravagances of the French Revolution had been the institution of a new calendar. The 18th Brumaire was 9 November, 1799, by Gregorian reckoning.

[3] Oman, Sir Charles, *A History of the Peninsular War* (Oxford, 1902), I, 125.

[4] "*Quand on fait la guerre en Espagne avec peu de monde on est battu, et avec beaucoup de monde on meurt de faim*".

[5] Fortescue, VI, 177-178; B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Decisive Wars of History* (Boston, 1929), 105-106. Wellington's own estimate of British casualties for the entire war was that "killed, prisoners, deserters, everything . . . amounted to 36,000 in six years". Earl Stanhope, *Conversations with the Duke of Wellington* (London, 1888), 86. The actual battle losses of the French would have been higher than this figure, but not appreciably. Yet the French, from the summer of 1808 on, lost an average of 100 men a day in the Peninsula. (Fortescue, X, 178).

[6] *Supplementary Dispatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Arthur Duke of Wellington*, ed. by his son, the second Duke of Wellington (London, 1858-72), VI, 80.

Chapter II

The Campaign of 1808

The Warfare of the Period

Before tracing the course of the British campaigns in the Peninsula, it will be useful to refer briefly to those differences in tactics and organization which distinguished the warfare of the early 19th century from that of today.

The siege and the large-scale formal battle had largely dominated military thinking throughout the 18th century. Sieges were methodical affairs which were conducted according to a set pattern. When a fortress was invested, the outworks were first stormed; then a series of trenches were dug parallel to the walls; attempts at mining were sometimes made; and heavy guns battered a breach through which entry could be gained. This technique, as we shall see, remained substantially unaltered until long after the Napoleonic Wars. Prior to the French Revolution field armies normally operated from the firm bases provided by fortresses, and when they met in combat both sides were careful to choose ground which was sufficiently open and flat to permit manœuvre. The tactics of the time generally aimed at breaking one of the enemy's flanks while the rest of his army was contained by inferior forces. Frequently the decisive blow would be delivered by a mass of cavalry which, after overcoming the opposing horse, would outflank the enemy's line and fall upon his exposed rear.[1] The campaigning season generally ended with the autumn when both sides retired into winter quarters to absorb reinforcements, refit, and recuperate from the exertions of the summer.

Between the days of Marlborough and the French Revolution no startling new weapons or innovations in military organization had been developed to alter this basic pattern. Some changes, however, had taken place. Probably the most important of these was that the French artillery had been completely reorganized by Gribeauval when he became Inspector General of that arm in 1776. The field artillery had been restricted to 4-pounder regimental guns and to 8- and 12-pounder guns and 6-inch howitzers for the divisional reserve. Gun-carriages and limbers had been standardized as much as possible and their parts made interchangeable. These reforms had to some extent been imitated by other armies, but the French artillery probably remained the best in Europe. With standardization

and lighter field guns, horse artillery became possible, and this increase in the artillery's mobility meant that guns could now keep up with cavalry. The greater importance of this arm meant in turn an increase in the number of horses and wagons in an army, a consequent lengthening of columns, and an increased requirement for light troops, both cavalry and infantry, for their protection.[2]

Continuous improvements in the firing mechanism of the musket had gradually increased the importance of infantry until it had become the dominant arm. By the beginning of the 19th century trained foot-soldiers could fire from two to three rounds a minute from their smooth-bore flintlock muskets and their fire could be accurate at ranges as great as a hundred yards, although most commanders preferred to wait until the enemy was much closer before ordering a volley. Musket-balls were large, weighing about 1¼ ounces and having a calibre of about .763 inch, so that a soldier could not normally carry more than 50-60 complete rounds on his person. Rifles had already been developed, but although specialized rifle battalions were formed in the British army in 1800,[3] armed with the Baker rifle, the Brown Bess musket remained for many years to come the standard weapon of the British infantryman. The other major infantry weapon was the bayonet, but cold steel was already of far less importance than fire-power. Although orders were sometimes still given for certain attacks to be carried out with muskets unloaded, and even sometimes with flints removed, so that only bayonets could be used, this practice was generally restricted to night attacks where surprise was desired.[4]

Cavalry was essentially of two types—heavy and light. The heavy cavalry consisted of dragoons, dragoon guards, and (in the French service) *cuirassiers*, but these distinctions amounted to little more than differences in uniform. For a time the *cuirassiers* were mounted on heavier horses than were the dragoons, but by 1813 even this distinction had ceased to exist. The light cavalry consisted of hussars, *chasseurs*, light dragoons, and lancers. Most cavalry, except the lancers, were armed with the sabre, and the heavy cavalry and some of the light cavalry carried, in addition, a carbine, or short musket. Cavalry fire-arms, however, were not of any great importance; the horsemen normally did the bulk of their work with their swords. Prior to 1811, the only lancers in the French service were one Polish regiment, the Lancers of the Vistula, but after Wagram, Napoleon formed nine French lancer regiments. The lance was not introduced into the British service until 1816.

Thus by the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars there had been refinements and improvements in weapons and organization, but no really fundamental changes had been made since Marlborough's day. Combatant forces were still essentially divided into three major arms: the cavalry, the artillery, and the infantry. When we come to consider the tactical employment of these arms in the Peninsula, we find that there were startling innovations only in infantry tactics.

Although the heavy cavalry had originally been intended as mounted infantry, they seldom in fact performed this role. Instead, heavy cavalry was used for shock tactics on the field of battle—the charge at the broken or disorganized square, the sweep down on the exposed flank, or the penetration and dissolution of an already shaken line. Light cavalry, on the other hand, was used for reconnaissance, as the mobile element with advanced guards, flank guards, and rear guards, and for pursuit. This last role, however, was never one in which the British Army excelled, and it is a moot point whether the absence of lancer regiments was the cause or the result of this defect. Certainly, the hussar, armed with a sabre, could not pursue as successfully as the lancer, since a fleeing infantryman who lay down in a ditch or fold of the ground could not be touched with the shorter weapon. In any case, the British Army was always relatively weak in cavalry in the Peninsula—a fact which may be accounted for by the difficulty of transporting horses to an overseas theatre of war, by the problem of providing adequate forage, by the broken nature of the countryside, and by the faith which Wellesley placed in his red-coated infantry.

The artillery was employed to shake and batter the lines and columns of the opposing force. Various field guns were in service use—six-pounders and nine-pounders were the standard British types—but most of them had a maximum effective range of about one thousand yards and a relatively low rate of fire. Howitzers, with a higher trajectory and capable of firing a heavy explosive shell, were also used for attacking troops behind cover. The types of ammunition in use were roundshot, chiefly used for destroying fortifications and emplacements; grape and canister shot and shrapnel, or spherical case shell, for use against personnel; and fuzed explosive shell which were used only in mortars and howitzers. The artillery could cause grievous casualties in the preparatory phases of an assault; it could interfere with the enemy's deployment; and throw already assembled lines into disorder. There were few more trying experiences than to wait patiently in an infantry line for the enemy to come within musket-range while in the meantime his cannon-balls tore red gaps in the ranks. Naturally enough, the

guns were especially effective when they were employed in enfilade, and the flanking fire of well-situated batteries could do much to contribute to a decision. One thing, however, the artillery of these days could not do: it could not provide a barrage, or curtain of fire, to protect the advance of attacking troops. The guns of the early 1800s had neither the rate of fire, nor the height of trajectory, nor yet the accuracy to be effective in a close support role.

Nevertheless, the artillery arm was increasingly important throughout the Napoleonic Wars. This, in no small measure, was due to the influence of Napoleon himself who, as a gunner officer, knew better than any of his opponents how to use the guns. Before the end of his career, Napoleon had come to the conclusion that the correct ratio of guns to infantry could not be less than four guns to every 1000 men, and in some of his battles he foreshadowed the tactics of the First World War by using artillery, not as an auxiliary arm, but as the principal deciding force on the field. Friedland and Borodino are perhaps the chief examples of this new style of warfare.

In the Peninsula, however, the artillery was not of decisive importance. Difficulties in transportation, in the adequate supply of ammunition, and in getting guns across country to the decisive spot on a battlefield, as well as the limited number of guns available, all tended to make the artillery definitely an auxiliary arm. There is no doubt that in Spain the honours go to the infantry.

Most of the differences between the French and British Armies had their origin in the French Revolution. Even before 1789 the French Army had introduced the divisional system whereby the great block of a homogeneous army had been divided into a number of self-contained formations of all arms, each under a general officer. Each of these formations was capable of fighting an independent action for a limited period of time. This organizational advance was extended and refined upon during the Napoleonic period. The Emperor organized his army into *corps d'armée* of two or more divisions, each with its own permanent commander and staff. One of the virtues of the new system was that Napoleon was able to march to his battles by different roads and over a vast extent of countryside in a way that would previously have been unthinkable. Before the days of Bonaparte, armies generally advanced as a compact unit, accepting all the limitations of leisurely concentration and slow deployment, and all the difficulties of supply which this system entailed. The imagination of Napoleon, visualizing ahead of time the decisive location of the campaign, could also direct the diverse French corps to the pre-ordained spot, and

could do this, moreover, in time to effect a decision. Napoleonic battles, contrary to previous custom, were not delayed until the entire French force had been marshalled on the field. Instead, the French corps were commonly committed in succession as they arrived, a practice as disturbing to the enemy's dispositions as it was injurious to his morale. In this context it would not be too much to say that Napoleon added another dimension to warfare, for he fought his battles not only in space but also in time. The system of army corps, by providing a requirement for a number of senior officers capable of assuming completely independent commands, led logically to the military phenomenon of Napoleon and his marshals—although of the marshals perhaps only Davoust was ever able to master the new technique. Thus in the Peninsula the French Army, a new and wonderful weapon, was on the whole handled uncertainly by men who did not understand the secrets of its strength.

The British Army was slow to adopt the French divisional system, and it was not until General William Cathcart's campaign in Zealand in 1807 that divisions were formed under a permanent commander and staff.[5] Even as late as the spring of 1809, Wellington's army in the Peninsula was composed of independent brigades. Prior to the Talavera campaign, however, Wellington organized his army into four infantry divisions each with a small staff. Four other infantry divisions and two cavalry divisions were formed in the course of the next two years.[6] Wellington gradually elaborated the staffs of his divisions until they came to include representatives from the Adjutant-General's and Quartermaster-General's departments and the commissariat, an assistant provost marshal, an engineer officer, and a representative from the medical department. The division came to have a field brigade of artillery (6 guns) attached to it, a divisional mule train, an ambulance corps, a signalling section, and detachments of the Corps of Guides and the Royal Staff Corps.[7]

Although the British Army's staff organization was, of course, initially inherited by Wellington in the Peninsular War, he soon put his own very definite mark upon it and caused it to evolve into something not too dissimilar from the present system. The staff then was not divided into three branches, each with its own clear-cut duties, as in the British service at present. The General Staff as we know it is a development of the twentieth century. In Wellington's time there were two basic military branches. The Adjutant-General's Branch was responsible, as indeed it still is, for various matters concerning personnel—states and returns, medical arrangements, discipline, and prisoners. The Quartermaster-General's Branch, in addition

to being concerned with quartering and movement, performed certain functions considered today as the business of the General Staff; notably, the Q.M.G. was the channel through which Wellington issued his operation orders. On the other hand, a civilian staff officer, the Commissary-General, was charged with many of the modern Q.M.G.'s functions, including transport and much of the business of supply; he was also the representative of the Treasury and responsible for the army's finances.[8] In addition the commander had a Military Secretary (responsible for officers' appointments and the commander's own financial business), and a staff of aides-de-camp who served him, in operations, as combined liaison officers and dispatch riders. In practice, Wellington's use of his staff varied with his confidence in the head of the department concerned. When Charles Stewart was Adjutant-General, for instance, his intelligence functions were taken away from him and assumed almost entirely by Wellington himself (and Stewart was reduced to tears in the process).[9] The Quartermaster-General, however, remained responsible for topographical intelligence and counter-espionage.[10] In the early years, too, Wellington kept the planning and operations functions entirely in his own hands, but by 1813, when he had gained confidence in Murray and when operations were more extended, he used his Quartermaster-General almost as a Chief of Staff, and Murray did not hesitate, upon occasion, to issue important orders on his own initiative when the commander-in-chief was absent. However, Wellington certainly dominated his headquarters and his staff in a way that later commanders, with more complex armies to control, have seldom been able to do. His presence generally made the difference between success or failure, and it was as well that in all the six years of war he never missed a day's work.

Complementary to the French divisional system was the revolutionary concept of the *levée en masse*. The French Army, instead of being a relatively small professional force, was an army of conscripts. More manpower was thus made available for the French campaigns, but by the very nature of things quantity had to take the place of quality. When the Revolution was forced to defend itself, there was no time for the prolonged training of its soldiers. The intricate manœuvres and the precise drill which had characterized all the pre-revolutionary armies were luxuries which the new France could not afford. The most important tactical result of this was that the French armies had of necessity to abandon the attack in line. Only long months on the parade square could train infantry to keep their dressing and steadiness in such a formation. This time revolutionary France did not have. Therefore the French generally attacked either in massed columns of companies or columns of divisions. In the company formation eight

companies stood, each three deep, one behind the other, giving a total battalion depth of 24 men; while in the column of divisions (that is, of two companies) the frontage of the battalion was doubled so that its total depth was only 12 men. In the attack these columns trusted to the converging shock of their superior mass and velocity to overcome the linear formations opposing them. This was essentially a retrograde step in tactics, for the great disadvantage of the attack in column was that only the men in the front rank could use their fire-arms. This tactical formation was made the more acceptable by the employment of very large numbers of skirmishers, or *tirailleurs*, whose role was to screen the head of the attacking column, to disorganize by fire the enemy line, and to present no target which would justify a general advance. The French attacks in column were frequently successful against the outnumbered and outgeneralled armies of their continental opponents, but tactics are often successful, not because they are fundamentally sound, but because they are incorrectly opposed. Moreover, brilliance in strategy not infrequently lends a false lustre to the accompanying tactics. Napoleon's genius, which was essentially strategical, thus compensated for the tactical deficiencies of the French and long prevented their being exposed, just as at a later date von Manstein's strategy[11] possibly gave the tactics of the *Blitzkrieg* a reputation greater than it deserved. Not unnaturally, the attack in column, because it had won victories, was retained even when more training time was available. Yet when the columns were opposed by trained and disciplined infantry in line, they were commonly met by a weight of converging fire which blew away the heads of the columns and prevented the attack from being pressed home. In the Peninsula the French column found itself opposed to the two-deep British line where every man could use his musket, and on every single occasion the line won.

This success was not due only to the mathematical calculation that the line in any given period of time could develop a much greater weight of aimed fire than the column, although this was certainly the basic factor in the problem. Before going to the Peninsula Wellington had devoted much thought to the "new French system" and had concluded that steady troops in line could defeat the column if three conditions were met. The first of these conditions was that the line should not be exposed before it actually came into action. This Wellington achieved by hiding his infantry on reverse slopes until he needed them. Secondly, the line would have to be protected by a screen of skirmishers which could keep off the enemy's *tirailleurs*. Finally, the line would have to be secured on its flanks, either by natural obstacles or by cavalry and artillery.[12]

Although from the beginning Napoleon had almost unlimited resources in manpower, he was forced to some extent to substitute enthusiasm, initiative, and leadership for training. These moral qualities were undoubtedly assets, but on the debit side the French superiority in numbers often led to a profligate disregard for casualties, while in later years even Napoleon was unable to resist the temptation of substituting mass for manœuvre. On the credit side the French armies of the Revolution, and indeed those of the entire Napoleonic era, were consistently able to outmarch their opponents. The quick step which swung the French battalions along to the tune of *La Marseillaise* enabled them to cover the ground appreciably faster than the equivalent formations of their enemies.

The French forces then were both larger and more amorphous than those of their enemies. This fact in turn led to a system of supply which, in normal European country, yielded the French great advantages. The armies of the Emperor lived off the land, depending for their daily needs of food and forage upon requisition rather than upon any system of established magazines or organized commissariats. The dispersion which this entailed was normally compensated for by the French speed of movement, by the flexibility of the divisional system, and above all else, at least when Napoleon himself was in command, by the imaginative leadership of the commander. In Spain and in Russia, on the contrary, where food and forage were scarce and where the inhabitants were fiercely hostile, the lack of a proper supply service proved disastrous.

The British Army was a volunteer force, and in the days when military discipline was often harsh and the soldier's life extremely hard and hazardous, the volunteer system certainly had its drawbacks. Wellington's own words on this subject are an adequate commentary. Discussing this problem long after the war, he said: "A French army is composed very differently from ours. The conscription calls out a share of every class—no matter whether your son or my son—all must march; but our friends—I may say it in this room—are the very scum of the earth. People talk of their enlisting from their fine military feeling—all stuff—no such thing. Some of our men enlist from having got bastard children—some for minor offences—many more for drink; but you can hardly conceive such a set brought together, and it really is wonderful that we should have made them the fine fellows they are."[13] As so often with Wellington, the adverse portion of this judgment is perhaps too much stressed, for fine fellows in the military sense the British soldiers certainly became, while there were unquestionably many men of sterling character in the British ranks. The British infantry in particular was undoubtedly the steadiest and best trained in Europe.

Nevertheless the weaknesses which Wellington castigated were all too apparent in the Peninsular campaigns.

The French Army, on the other hand, springing as it did from the broad mass of the people and fighting for at least half the period of the Napoleonic Wars from revolutionary conviction, possessed a magnificent morale which was not the least of its assets. For many years the French *élan* carried all before it. The old green coat of the Emperor, the fiery red head of Marshal Ney, and the waving ostrich plumes of Murat's exotic headgear were merely outward and visible signs of an inner and spiritual vitality. Then too, the fact that for many years promotion in the French Army was open to merit was a decided advantage. At least until well into the days of the Empire it was indeed true that every French private carried a marshal's baton in his knapsack. The men who actually became French marshals, on the other hand, were frequently opposed in battle by royal or aristocratic incompetents.

By 1808, however, the bright day of the Empire was already beginning to dim; the *élan* was less; nepotism was advancing stronger claims than merit; and the Revolution had degenerated into a dynasty. In Spain, these defects were glaringly apparent. In this theatre, because of the degeneration of the Napoleonic system, because of the unrelenting opposition of the civilian population, because of the nature of the country, and because of the tactical ability of the British commander, the merits of the Grand Army were much in eclipse. In the Peninsula the struggle was between a new method of warfare which had lost its revolutionary soul, and old and proven principles applied by a more mathematical and pedestrian, but sounder, talent.

Wellesley Arrives in the Peninsula

In June 1808, Portugal followed the Spanish example and rose in revolt against the French invaders. *Juntas* sprang up in the Portuguese as in the Spanish provinces; again the rising was spontaneous through the country; and again French couriers were killed, French outposts were attacked, and small bodies of French troops were overwhelmed and murdered. Perhaps the Portuguese were less fierce than the Spaniards, but their insurrection was certainly serious enough.

In Lisbon, Junot was inclined to be pessimistic. He was a big, blustering, brave man, by no means devoid of military talent, but prone to take an emotional rather than a rational view of events. He had sustained a serious head wound in the Italian campaign and those periodic bouts of depression, one of which was ultimately to lead to his suicide, may already have begun

to cloud his military judgement. In any case, although his forces now amounted to some 26,000 men, he seriously considered evacuating Portugal. However, a Council of War, at which Junot presided, decided to concentrate the French force about Lisbon by drawing in most of the outlying garrisons, and then to subdue the revolt in a systematic manner. As a first step in implementing this policy, a punitive expedition of 7000, under General Loison, was sent to Evora on 25 July where it decisively defeated a raw Portuguese force, sacked the town, and continued on its way north.

Meanwhile, shortly after Wellesley's expeditionary force had sailed from Ireland, the British Cabinet came to the conclusion that it should enlarge the army in the Peninsula. Accordingly, a force of 5000 men, under General Spencer, which had been operating out of Gibraltar and giving what help it could to the rebels in the south of Spain, was directed to place itself under Wellesley's command. Moreover, 5000 reinforcements under Brigadiers Acland and Anstruther were dispatched to the theatre. Sir John Moore, with a force of 11,000 men, had recently returned from an abortive expedition to Sweden and it was decided that this force too should be sent to Portugal.

The Horse Guards, the Commander-in-Chief, and the King himself had proved to be more seriously opposed to the bypassing of Moore than the Cabinet had at first supposed. The Ministers, however, were still determined that Moore should not be given an independent command, and accordingly they appointed Sir Hew Dalrymple to be commander-in-chief of all British forces in the Peninsula. In the Cabinet's view, this by itself was not a sufficient safeguard, since if Dalrymple for any reason should be incapacitated, the command would have devolved on Moore who was the next senior. Therefore the Ministers appointed Sir Harry Burrard as Dalrymple's second-in-command. On the basis of their combat records, Moore and Wellesley were undoubtedly the best British commanders available, and were held to be so both in the Army and in popular esteem. On the other hand, although Dalrymple and Burrard were very senior officers, neither of them had made his reputation on active service. In addition it may be mentioned that at this time Dalrymple was 70 and Burrard was 73, while Moore was 47 and Wellesley only 39. In spite of this calculated affront, however, Sir John Moore did not resign as the Cabinet had confidently expected he would, but signified his willingness to serve anywhere in any capacity—a soldierly attitude which subsequent events amply rewarded.

In the meanwhile, Wellesley, on board a fast frigate, left the main convoy and proceeded straight to Corunna. There, on 20 July, he conferred

with the local Portuguese *junta*, and had his first taste of the ambiguity and intrigue which riddled these organizations. Failing to obtain any conclusive results or reliable information from his first conference with the Portuguese authorities, Wellesley sailed the next day to Oporto to consult the Supreme *Junta*, under the Bishop of Oporto. The results of this conference were again unsatisfactory, but Wellesley was led to believe that the Portuguese rebels had a considerably larger force under arms than was actually the case. Accordingly he took the decision to land his forces and began to disembark them on 1 August at Mondego Bay. His aim was to concentrate a sufficient force on Portuguese territory, and then, in co-operation with the Portuguese, to march on Lisbon with a view to liberating the country from the invader. Because of the heavy surf, it was five days before the landing was completed, and no advance had been ordered when on 6 August General Spencer's force of 5000 joined Wellesley. When the disembarkation was completed and when what stores were available had been requisitioned from the countryside, Wellesley began on 10 August to march on Lisbon, taking the coastal road so that he might remain in touch with the British fleet. The next day Wellesley was joined by a Portuguese force under General Freire, but the two commanders quarrelled about the route which should be taken to Lisbon and parted in anger. Freire, however, did leave 1400 Portuguese infantry and about 250 cavalry under Wellesley's command.

Roliça

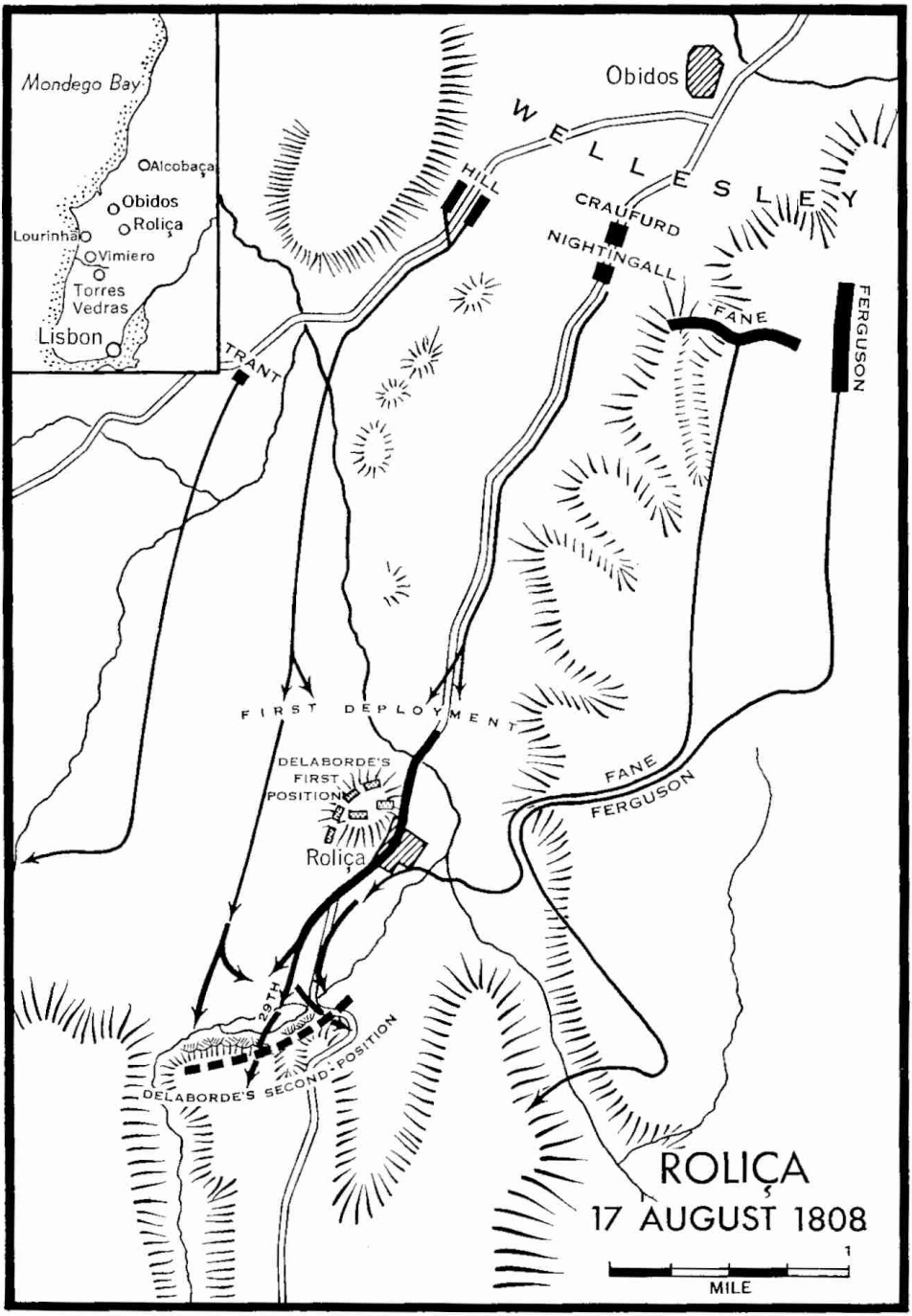
The British Army's first contact with the French in the Peninsula occurred on 14 August when there was some skirmishing between Wellesley's advance guard and French *vedettes*[14] near Alcobaça. These troops belonged to a small force under General Delaborde, who had been ordered north on 6 August to cover General Loison's retirement on Lisbon and to intercept and delay the British. On 15 August four British companies of the advanced guard drove in the French outposts near the town of Obidos, and, pushing their pursuit too far, had a sharp brush with Delaborde's rearguard, an unequal engagement from which the British were only extricated by the timely arrival of General Spencer's brigade.

Immediately to the south of Obidos the ground stretches out in a horseshoe-shaped plain almost entirely surrounded by mountains and with the open heel of the horseshoe to the north. The surface of this plain is broken by a number of isolated, steep hills. A small but swift mountain stream with three main tributaries rises in the mountains to the south and runs across the plain to the north.

Falling back from Obidos, Delaborde decided to make his stand near the village of Roliça, some three miles to the south. He chose his position with considerable skill, deploying originally on a broad low hill north-west of the village. From this site he commanded the main road to Torres Vedras, while the right flank of his position was afforded some protection by the main course of the little mountain stream. The slope to his front, covered as it was by pines and small shrubs, gave excellent cover for his sharpshooters.

On the morning of 17 August, Wellesley observed the French dispositions from the church tower at Obidos, and made his preparations for the attack. The British force at this time was composed of some 14,000 troops, 18 guns, and about 1600 Portuguese, while Delaborde had at his command some 4000 infantry, 250 light cavalry, and 5 guns.

Wellesley's plan for attack called for a double envelopment on both French flanks, combined with a frontal assault down the axis of the high road which led through Roliça. Accordingly, he detached to his right Colonel Trant with 1200 Portuguese infantry and 50 cavalry, while Major-General Ferguson was ordered to move wide to the left with two brigades plus three companies, 40 dragoons, and one light battery. In the centre, which was commanded by Wellesley himself, Hill's brigade, preceded by cavalry, advanced on the right; Nightingall's and Catlin Craufurd's brigades, plus two batteries, advanced down the road; and Fane's riflemen moved on the left to cover the gap between the British centre and Ferguson's detachment.


Mondego Bay
Alcobaça
Obidos
Roliça
Lourinhã
Vimiero
Torres Vedras
Lisbon
TRANT
Obidos
WELLESLEY
HILL
CRAUFURD
NIGHTINGALL
FANE
FERGUSON
FIRST DEPLOYMENT
DELABORDE'S FIRST POSITION
Roliça
FANE
FERGUSON
29TH
DELABORDE'S SECOND POSITION
ROLIÇA
17 AUGUST 1808
1
MILE

The French outposts gave early warning of the British advance and fell back in good order. Everything went as planned, with the British deploying in the centre and Ferguson and Trant converging neatly in from both sides. Delaborde, however, waited until this deployment was nearly completed and then rapidly retired under cover of a cavalry screen, only to reappear a short while later on the French main position about one mile to the rear. Midday of 17 August thus found the British force deployed for battle against an enemy who no longer opposed them, and the morning's work was wasted.

The French main position was on a somewhat higher and longer hill, the left end of which dropped sharply into a gorge, while the extreme right of the French line was given some protection by a similar though less precipitous feature. Although the stream behind which the French deployed was only a very minor obstacle, the frontal face of their position was extremely steep and the only reasonable access to the top was by means of four dry gullies which mountain floods had etched into the hillside. A long series of rocky outcrops at the foot of the position provided excellent cover for the French skirmishers.

Wellesley, however, merely repeated his earlier dispositions and attacked the second position in exactly the same way as he had planned to assault the first. It was his intention to wait until his flanking columns had converged and then to launch his frontal assault up the four gullies on the face of the position. Unfortunately, before either Trant or Ferguson had been able to complete their turning movements, Colonel Lake of the 29th Regiment prematurely led his troops up one of the gullies. Although the 29th came under fire both from the front and the flanks, they penetrated deep into the French position and had begun to deploy on the hilltop when they were charged from the rear by a French regiment. Lake himself was killed, some prisoners were lost, and the remainder of the regiment was driven downhill in disorder. To save the situation Wellesley ordered a general attack before his flanking formations had closed in. Three separate British assaults upon the ridge were repulsed, but as the fighting continued the British superiority in guns began to tell. The British infantry at last reached the top of the hill and when Ferguson's column began to appear on the scene, Delaborde gave the order for retirement. Again this retirement was skilfully and rapidly conducted under cover of feint cavalry attacks, and the French general, who had himself been wounded in the action, had the satisfaction of getting his force away to safety with the loss of only 600 men and three guns. The British losses totalled 479 all ranks.[15]

This minor engagement, the first real action of the British Army in the Peninsular War, is of more than passing interest. The skilful use by the French of outposts to give early warning, the masterly employment of ground to force the premature deployment of an attacking force, the effective use of natural obstacles to assist the defence, and the cleanness and celerity of the two withdrawals are models of their kind. Wellesley himself perhaps was not too satisfied with the battle. He had fought at odds of four to one in his favour but had achieved little more than equal casualties. Whether or not a wider turning movement begun earlier on one of the flanks would have succeeded in placing Delaborde's force between the hammer and the anvil is open to question, since Wellesley lacked the cavalry which would have provided such a wide-marching force with the mobility it required. In any case, it is not too much to suppose that Wellesley pondered long over the lessons of this miniature battle, and it is probable that his reflections on the combat at Roliça had considerable influence on his later and more successful engagements. The tactics of the frontal assault, which he had found adequate in India, were apparently less efficacious against French troops. Certainly Wellesley was never again to underestimate the fire-power of steady infantry in a good defensive position, nor was he ever again to attack precipitately with only a portion of his force. In the future, it was to be Wellesley who would use the protection of hillsides for a defensive action, and the memory of the unsuccessful assaults on the ridge at Roliça may perhaps have influenced the later positioning of his infantry on the ridges at Busaco in 1810 and Waterloo in 1815.

The Battle of Vimiero

The day after the battle of Roliça, Wellesley, hearing that Acland's brigade had arrived, moved south-west to cover his disembarkation. On the 19th he reached Vimiero[16] and on the evening of the same day Acland began landing his troops, an operation which was largely completed by last light on the 20th. As luck would have it, the ship bearing Sir Harry Burrard arrived just as Acland's debarkation was completed. Wellesley at once went aboard to report and to counsel an immediate advance, but Burrard, who was a cautious man, forbade any movement until Sir John Moore should arrive with his reinforcements.

In the meantime, Junot was concentrating his army to oppose the British. For fear of British landings in his rear and because the temper in the capital was unmistakably rebellious, Junot had left seven battalions in Lisbon. On his march north, however, he first joined forces with Loison and then fell back to Torres Vedras on 18 August. There on the 19th he was joined by

Delaborde. Although Junot's total strength now amounted to only about half of the troops under his command in Portugal, he determined to attack the British before they received further reinforcements. Accordingly he reorganized his army into two infantry divisions, an infantry reserve, and one cavalry division under General Margaron. The French infantry totalled approximately 10,400 and the cavalry 2000, while the artillery support consisted of 23 guns. Wellesley, on the other hand, now had at his disposal some 17,000 British and 2000 Portuguese troops with three batteries of artillery.[17]

The ground in the vicinity of Vimiero is marked by a steep ridge north of the town. This ridge runs in a general north-east—south-west direction but is divided by a deep gorge through which flows the Maceira River. Immediately south of the town of Vimiero and masking both it and the gap of the gorge from the south is Vimiero Hill, a broad, low feature some 800 yards wide.

Wellesley had not intended to take up a defensive position in this locality, for it had been his plan to advance at the earliest possible moment. Consequently, his dispositions were to require extensive alteration when he came under attack. He had placed six brigades less one battalion and eight guns on that portion of the ridge west of the gorge where water was plentiful, while only one battalion was on the eastern ridge where water was scarce. Colonel Trant's Portuguese were in the rear at Maceira north of the gorge, while on Vimiero Hill itself there were two brigades, Anstruther's and Fane's. The cavalry, the remainder of the artillery, and all his transport were in the valley north-west of the village. Although he was not expecting to be attacked, Wellesley threw his piquets well forward and his cavalry patrolled extensively to the south, especially along the road which led to Torres Vedras. A little after midnight on 20 August Wellesley received information that the French were within an hour's march, but he seems to have been inclined to discount the reliability of this report. Nevertheless, as a precautionary measure he ordered six guns to Vimiero Hill.

All through 19 and 20 August the French cavalry swarmed about the British position and apparently reported to Junot that the British force was stretched between the sea on the west and the village of Lourinhã in the east, a distance of over six miles. Junot may therefore have believed that the British were so dispersed that his small force could attack and defeat them in detail. In any case, the French began their move on Vimiero during the night of 20-21 August. As was its custom, the British Army was standing to its

arms before first light on the morning of the 21st, but it was 7 o'clock before clouds of dust betrayed Junot's advance.

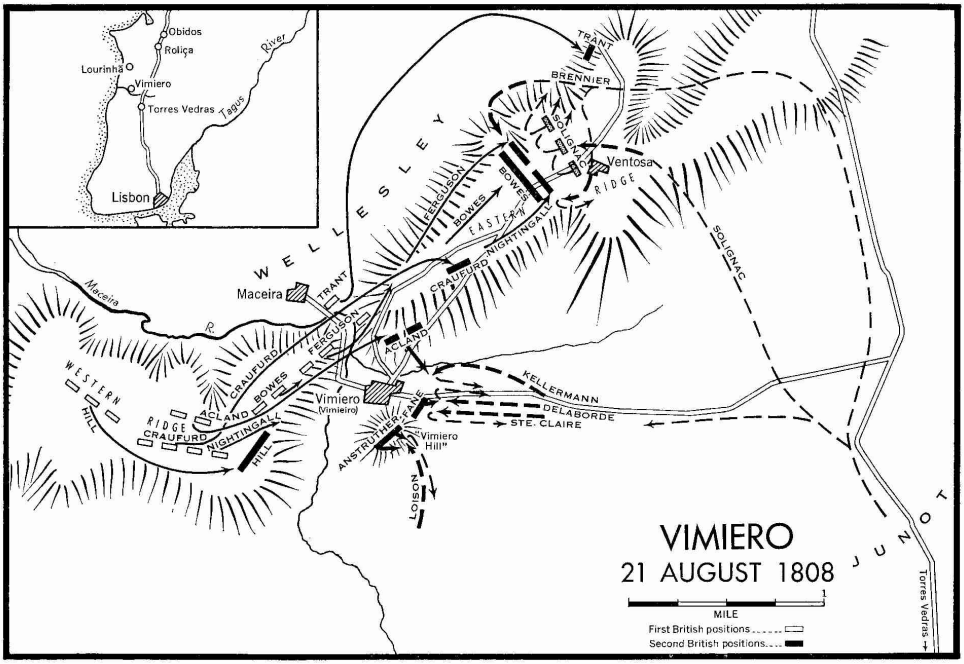
Junot's reconnaissance was very brief and from it he seems to have arrived at a serious misconception of the British dispositions. He appears to have believed that the main body of the British were on Vimiero Hill and he was perhaps of the opinion that both the eastern and the western ridges were unoccupied. His plan was to attack Vimiero Hill from the north, east, and south simultaneously. He therefore sent Brennier's brigade of four battalions and one regiment of dragoons wide to the right to come on Vimiero Hill from the north by way of the eastern ridge. Another brigade under Delaborde advanced on Vimiero Hill down the main road, while a third force under Loison moved in from the south.

Wellesley, who was on the eastern ridge, saw the dust kicked up by Brennier's dragoons and at once reinforced his left by moving four brigades (Ferguson's, Nightingall's, Bowes' and Acland's) from the western ridge across the gorge to the east. Trant's Portuguese had already been moved east and north to a parallel ridge and Craufurd's brigade came across to cover them. Three brigades (Ferguson's, Nightingall's and Bowes') had taken up their positions on the extreme left flank at right angles to the former British front. Craufurd's and Acland's brigades were deployed along the southern side of the eastern ridge. Fane and Anstruther still held Vimiero Hill, while Hill's brigade alone remained on the western ridge.

Delaborde's attack along the road from the east was the first to be opened. This assault was pushed forward with great gallantry, but as Delaborde's troops were drawn away from their original axis of advance towards the hostile fire they exposed their left flank to a charge which threw them back down the hill with heavy loss. Even as Delaborde's troops were retreating, the second French attack under General Loison was opened from the south against Anstruther's brigade. Again the French came forward gallantly, but again they were badly shaken by the British volleys and again a flank attack on the French left threw the assaulting troops into disorder. Loison's force in its turn fled back down the hill.

By now Junot had some inkling that the British occupied the eastern ridge in force, and so he detached Solignac's brigade with six guns to follow Brennier and to support him. This rash manœuvre meant that Junot now had only four grenadier battalions as his reserve, but these he unhesitatingly committed in the centre in another attempt to capture Vimiero Hill.

Even here, however, the French attacks were completely uncoordinated. General Ste. Claire with two battalions of the grenadiers and four guns moved straight down the road which led to Vimiero village from the east. Along its line of march this force came under heavy fire from the British artillery and suffered numerous casualties from shrapnel shell. As Ste. Claire's two battalions closed in they came under the concentrated musket-fire of three British battalions, and, after suffering heavy loss, this attack too fell back in disorder.



Meanwhile General Kellermann with the remaining two grenadier battalions moved up behind Ste. Claire and swung north to come down on Vimiero village from that direction. As Kellermann's force came within range, Acland on the eastern ridge opened fire on his own initiative with his artillery and sent out four companies of light infantry to snipe at the flank and rear of the French. There was a short period of confused and heavy fighting at the entrance of Vimiero village before Kellermann's troops fell back. Unfortunately, the British dragoons, seeking to take advantage of the retirement, pursued Kellermann's force too far and were in turn fallen upon and badly cut up by Margaron's cavalry.

The fighting in the centre was now over and the French had everywhere been repulsed, but the fighting on the British left was just about to begin. Brennier on his northward march to the eastern ridge had continued too far before wheeling west and had lost his way in a countryside of deep gullies and restricted views. Solignac, however, who had followed Brennier to the north, wheeled left at the correct place and came down on the British position by the road leading from Ventosa. Here Solignac's brigade met the brigades of Ferguson and Nightingall, but made no headway whatsoever in their attack. Once more the French were met with disciplined volleys of musket-fire followed by a charge in superior numbers and once more they broke in retreat, leaving their guns behind them. The fleeing French were pursued by the two centre battalions of the British while Ferguson's left-hand battalion and Nightingall's right-hand battalion were left to guard the captured guns.

Now the stage was set for the sixth and last of the isolated and futile engagements which comprised the battle of Vimiero. Brennier to the north heard the sound of firing which accompanied Solignac's attack and marched toward the sound of the guns. He sent his cavalry around the eastern flank of the British position and with his four battalions attacked the two British battalions which remained near the original position. This assault was temporarily successful, but the British rallied and the two battalions which had been pursuing Solignac returned to join in a counter-attack which drove off the French. When Brennier himself was taken prisoner, his troops retreated under cover of their cavalry. The battle of Vimiero was over.

Everywhere the French were scattered or in flight. Moreover, in their disorder they had left the road to Torres Vedras open, so that the British by a quick pounce could have reached this town before the retreating French. To make matters worse, Solignac's brigade in its retirement had missed its way and was penned up in a ravine to the north. However, Sir Harry Burrard, who had come ashore just before the battle opened and had allowed Wellesley to conduct the fighting as he saw fit, was now adamant in his refusal to permit any pursuit. This excessive caution undoubtedly prevented the British from reaping the full fruits of their victory. While Wellesley was arguing unavailingly with Burrard, Junot took advantage of the delay, reformed his scattered forces, and moved off towards Torres Vedras. Although the action was thus prevented from being decisive, the French had nevertheless suffered a most serious reverse. Junot had lost 14 guns and the French casualties were 1800 compared with a British loss of 720 all ranks.[18]

At Vimiero almost every conceivable mistake which could have been made was committed by Junot. The first and greatest, of course, was to attack at all with a force so decidedly inferior in numbers to the defenders. The excuse that Junot was mistaken as to the British dispositions merely leads in turn to the further charge that his reconnaissance was utterly inadequate. The French attacks were launched separately and without co-ordination, and thus the already great disparity in numbers was wantonly multiplied. The squandering of the reserve to reinforce failure and the rash reinforcement of Brennier by Solignac's brigade were equally grave errors, either one of which could have lost the battle by itself.

On the British side there is little credit to be awarded for winning a battle against so incompetent an attack. Yet Wellesley's rapid appreciation of the French line of advance and his speedy re-disposition were both admirable. From then on the battle fought itself. Although Sir Harry Burrard has been strongly criticized for his unwillingness to pursue, it should be remembered that the French cavalry was intact at the end of the battle, while the British cavalry had been destroyed; that fresh French troops (a battalion which Junot had called up from Lisbon as reinforcements) had been sighted, and that their strength was unknown; that the British artillery was unfit to travel and that the British commissariat had been dispersed. These considerations would, it is true, have counted for little with a more energetic commander (Wellesley cared for none of them) but Burrard was not energetic, and the chance was lost.[19]

The Conclusion of Hostilities in Portugal

On the early morning of 22 August, Sir Hew Dalrymple landed and assumed the command of the British Army which had thus, in a period of forty-eight hours, come under three separate commanders. Dalrymple proved no more anxious than Burrard to take any immediate action against the French and unfortunately the first meeting between Wellesley and Sir Hew, at which Wellesley urged Dalrymple to advance, was to set the tone of their future relationship. The two men did not get along well together, and little effort was made by either of them to conceal their mutual antipathy.

On the very day that Dalrymple assumed command, General Kellermann was escorted into the British lines under a flag of truce. He proposed an armistice for forty-eight hours which would be followed by a formal convention under which the French forces would evacuate Portugal. After considerable negotiation, the Convention of Cintra was formally signed on 31 August. Under this Convention the French were not to be regarded as

prisoners of war but were to retain their arms and were to be transported from Portugal on British ships. They would be free to serve again after their arrival in France. One of the terms of the Convention of Cintra, which was later to be the subject of much controversy, provided that the French were to be allowed to take their personal effects with them as well as their military stores. In practice, of course, this meant that the French were given a free hand to carry off their loot.

Yet it seems probable that, at the time the Convention of Cintra was signed, the British made the best bargain they could under the circumstances. It is true that the battle of Vimiero had been a decisive French defeat, but Junot still had a formidable army under his command. He had been allowed to reunite this army and to escape the worst efforts of his folly at Vimiero. If the French had not been permitted to depart from Portugal in peace, the British would almost certainly have been faced with a series of protracted and costly sieges, the outcome of which would have been far from certain. On the French side, although they still had an army intact, the senior officers can have had little confidence in its commander. This lack of confidence in Junot may well have been the deciding factor in the deliberations of the French Council of War which asked for the Convention.

The British Army marched by easy stages to Lisbon, but under Dalrymple's inept handling the condition of the troops began rapidly to deteriorate. The staff work was bad, the administration worse, and there was no harmony between the senior officers. Not unnaturally all of this was reflected in a sharp lowering of morale. Sir John Moore's force had meanwhile arrived and its disembarkation was completed by 30 August, but neither Moore nor Wellesley was able to do much to better the situation. Dalrymple, suspicious and hostile, kept his own counsel while things went from bad to worse.

Wellesley was so dissatisfied that he twice applied for permission to return to England.[20] On 17 September he went so far as to write to Moore requesting an interview for the express purpose of co-ordinating measures which would relieve Sir Hew Dalrymple from his command and substitute Sir John Moore.[21] This interview Moore granted, but Wellesley had seriously mistaken his man. In an era when all too many officers tended to be independent to the point of insubordination, Moore was completely loyal both to the service and to his seniors. He could not help but agree with Wellesley's assessment of Dalrymple, but he flatly rejected anything in the nature of a conspiracy against the Commander-in-Chief. Such was Moore's

personal charm, however, that he parted from Wellesley on the best of terms. They were not fated to meet again, for Wellesley sailed for England on the following day.

Meanwhile in Britain there was a great public outcry against the terms of the Convention of Cintra. The British people, who had been given to understand from Wellesley's dispatches that the French Army in Portugal had been virtually destroyed at Vimiero, were stunned at the news that this Army, in full possession of its arms, was now to be returned to France in British ships. The Portuguese also protested vigorously against some of the terms of the Convention. The British Cabinet was forced to bow before the storm and to institute a Court of Enquiry. Dalrymple and Burrard were both recalled to England, and their conduct, together with Wellesley's, was investigated by the Court. As it turned out, the findings of the Court of Enquiry were innocuous in the extreme, for they absolved everyone from blame and conveniently ignored some of the most serious faults of the campaign. Nevertheless a scapegoat had to be found, and, since Dalrymple was the obvious choice, he was disgraced and relieved of his command. The most important upshot of all this, of course, was that the Cabinet's determination to by-pass Sir John Moore had failed completely. On 7 October Moore was officially appointed to command the British Army in Portugal, and he at once began with characteristic energy to prepare his force for an immediate invasion of Spain.

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[1] Sir Charles Oman, "Column and Line in the Peninsula", *Studies in the Napoleonic Wars* (New York, 1930), 83, 84, and W. Y. Carman, *A History of Firearms* (London, 1955), 102-111.

[2] Major-General J. F. C. Fuller, *The Decisive Battles of the Western World Vol. II*, (London, 1955), 350.

[3] Carman, *op. cit.*, 109.

[4] R. M. Barnes, *A History of the Regiments and Uniforms of the British Army* (London), 62.

[5] S. G. P. Ward, *Wellington's Headquarters, A Study of the Administrative Problems in the Peninsula 1809-1814* (Oxford, 1957), 51, 52.

[6] The Light Division, February, 1810; 5th Division, August, 1810; 6th Division, October, 1810; 7th Division, March, 1811.

[7] Ward, *op. cit.*, 161.

[8] *Ibid.*, 73.

[9] *The Croker Papers*, ed. Louis J. Jennings (London, 1885), I, 346.

[10] Ward, *op. cit.*, 121.

[11] von Manstein was probably the author of the German plan for the invasion of France and the Low Countries in 1940.

[12] Oman, *op. cit.*, 99-105.

[13] Earl Stanhope, *op. cit.*, 18.

[14] Mounted sentries posted ahead of outposts to give early warning of an enemy advance.

[15] *Dispatches*, IV, 100.

[16] The form used here is the common English spelling, but the battle honour is Vimiera, and the proper Portuguese spelling is Vimieiro.

[17] Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War, I*, 246-7, 251.

[18] *Ibid.*, 261, 262.

[19] The foregoing account of the battle of Vimiero has been drawn from the following principal sources: *Dispatches*, IV, 108-116; Fortescue, VI, 220-235; Oman, I, 242-262; Napier, W. F. P., *History of the War in the Peninsula and in the South of France from the Year 1807 to the Year 1814*, (London, 1831), I, 207-213 and 247-249.

[20] *Dispatches*, IV, 147, 158.

[21] *Ibid.*, 156.

Chapter III

Sir John Moore's Campaign

The Situation in the Peninsula in the Autumn of 1808

When he assumed command of the British Army in Portugal, Sir John Moore had little reliable information about the military situation of his allies. His instructions were that he was to move into Spain with an army some 20,000 strong formed from the British troops in Portugal. An expedition of 12,000 under Sir David Baird was on its way from the British Isles to join him, and he was directed first to effect a junction with this force and then, having done so, to formulate his future plans in co-operation with the Spanish Commander-in-Chief. The object of the campaign which would be initiated by these moves was to defeat the French forces and force their withdrawal from Spain.

Although these instructions were both unambiguous and sufficiently general, they nevertheless reflected the misplaced confidence of the British Government in the military capabilities of the insurgents. The Spaniards themselves were talking airily of driving Napoleon's troops back over the Pyrenees and even of invading France, and much of this unfounded optimism permeated the reports of the various British agents who had been dispatched to the Peninsula to distribute arms and money to the rebels. Undoubtedly too, Junot's evacuation of Portugal and the extent of the initial Spanish successes had caused the British Ministers to take far too hopeful a view of the situation. Shortly after Moore replaced Dalrymple, these various rash estimates of Spanish strength began to receive vigorous support from a more senior British official in Spain. On 19 October, John Hookham Frere, a personal friend of Canning's, arrived as British Minister to Madrid. Despite the fact that he was a scholarly and in his way an able man, Frere's predilection for the Spanish cause led him greatly to overestimate the prospects of Spanish success and seriously to minimize the difficulties and divisions which beset Spanish arms. At first Moore does not seem to have assessed any more accurately than the British Cabinet the unreliability of the Spanish forces, but he was soon to learn from bitter experience, and then, perhaps, his disillusionment was to be somewhat too complete.

In fact, although the overwhelming majority of the Spanish people were wholehearted in their opposition to the French, provincial jealousies,

personal rivalries, and a confidence as widespread as it was ill-founded, prevented any smooth co-ordination of the Spanish effort. When Moore was ordered to support the Spanish armies, no Spanish Commander-in-Chief had been appointed; no real co-operation existed between the various Spanish generals; and there was indeed nothing which could truly be considered a central government in Spain, for even after the Supreme Spanish *junta* was belatedly organized, this body could not guarantee that its orders would be obeyed by the virtually independent commanders in the field.

Meanwhile, all along the Ebro River, Spanish forces, totalling no more than 80,000 men, were being deployed in a haphazard manner against the French. Actually, individual Spanish commanders placed their "armies" pretty much where they chose. Thus, although the Spanish levies were strung out along a front of over 200 miles between Valmaseda in the north and Saragossa to the south-east, there were huge gaps of up to 60 miles between some of their concentrations. Moreover, the Spanish troops were untrained, badly armed, undisciplined, and practically unequipped.

On the other hand, although at the end of August the French forces in Spain amounted to only some 65,000, Napoleon had already determined to avenge the humiliation of Baylen and to crush the Spanish revolt once and for all. The rest of Europe for the time being was quiet, and only Austria might have caused trouble once Napoleon was committed in the Peninsula. Therefore, the French Emperor first obtained an agreement with Tsar Alexander of Russia which secured him from any threat of Austrian attack, and then began pouring troops into Spain. By September, eight veteran army corps[1] were on the move from the Rhine, the Elbe and northern Italy. The "old moustaches" of the Grand Army made a happy progress through France at vintage time, and by the end of October, 146,000 French troops were south of the Pyrenees. By the end of November this number was to rise to 250,000.

While these great events were developing along the Ebro, Moore in Lisbon had decided to move his army into Spain overland rather than by sea, since he knew that transport would be difficult to procure in Galicia and since he felt that an embarkation "unhinged" an army.[2] However, he was from the outset plagued by innumerable administrative difficulties. There was a shortage of horses, mules, and wagons, and, indeed, on 9 October Moore reported to Castlereagh that the army which he had taken over from Sir Hew Dalrymple was: ". . . without equipment of any kind, either for the carriage of the light baggage of regiments, artillery stores, commissariat stores, or any other appendage of an army, and without a magazine formed

on any of the routes by which we are to march."[3] Moreover, the Spanish promises to provide food and forage were not kept, while local purchase was made the more difficult by an acute shortage of silver coin.

It was bad enough that Dalrymple had done little to remedy the administrative problems of the army, but what was worse was that he had also neglected two matters of great operational importance. In the first place, the British forces which were intended to invade Spain had not been deployed with this end in view. When Moore took over the command, the entire army, except for two brigades which had been sent to the vicinity of Elvas, was still encamped about Lisbon. Secondly, and much more serious, was the fact that no adequate reconnaissance had been carried out on the roads leading to the north-eastern frontier.

All this was ominous enough, but in addition Moore had been appointed to his command only after the most strenuous efforts on the part of the British Cabinet to keep him from it. Consequently, although he was undoubtedly pleased with his change of fortune, Moore could not have found his new situation entirely comfortable. It is true that Castlereagh had written him a most generous letter, promising him the full support of the Government, but even a less sensitive or ambitious man than Moore must have felt that this support would only be likely to continue so long as he was successful. Such reflections, together with the knowledge that there was entrusted to his care the only field force available to Britain—not *a* British Army *but* the British Army—may have induced in Moore an unwonted hesitancy and caution. And neither hesitancy nor caution surely, were the natural habits of mind of a man who had been wounded in every major engagement in which he had taken part.

Moore's Advance into Spain

Moore's original intention was to march his army into Spain and effect a junction with Baird's force, possibly at Rioseco or Benavente, or even at Valladolid or Burgos. The exact place of concentration would have to be determined by events, nor was Moore unduly concerned about this necessary vagueness in his plans since he believed that his march would in any case be covered by Spanish armies. Now, however, the British commander made a fateful decision, one which was to influence for ill the course of the entire campaign. He decided to split his force and utilize all four of the principal roads which led into Spain from Lisbon. Thus the British infantry moved out of Portugal along the roads Lisbon-Coimbra-Celorico; Lisbon-Abrantes-Castelo Branco-Guarda; and Lisbon-Elvas-

Alcantara; while the whole of Moore's cavalry, together with six out of seven of his artillery batteries, and four infantry battalions, were placed under the command of General Hope and sent along the road Lisbon-Elvas-Almaraz-Talavera-Toledo-Madrid. This last roundabout route to the concentration area added some 130 miles and 12 days to the time-table, but although Moore realized the risk he was running by such a dispersion of his forces, he considered it necessary. Both his Portuguese and British advisers told him that the other, shorter roads were impassable for artillery, and Moore believed them.[4] Why all the British cavalry should have been sent by this great detour is, perhaps, harder to understand.

In any case, there can be no doubt that Moore allowed himself to be misled about the condition of the roads which led from the Portuguese capital to the north-eastern frontier, and this in spite of the fact that the French general Loison, only four months previously, had taken his guns from Lisbon to Almeida and back to Abrantes without difficulty. Moore soon realized his mistake. On 5 November he was already recording his uneasy reflections on the unnecessary separation of his cavalry and guns,[5] and on 8 November he specifically acknowledged in a letter to General Hope that "if anything goes wrong, we have not necessity to plead" since the route taken by the main body via Abrantes-Castelo Branco-Guarda was fit for artillery.[6] Incidentally, the route by way of Coimbra and Celorico was even easier than that by Guarda, as both Wellington and Masséna were to demonstrate two years later.[7]

Although the British Army began to move out of Lisbon on 18 October, the last British troops were not clear of that city until the 29th. Moore himself, with the first of his infantry, reached Salamanca on 13 November and halted there to await the rest of the army. In the meanwhile, Sir David Baird's force had arrived at Corunna on 14 October, and, after some delay, had begun to move south-east to join Moore. Unfortunately, owing to an administrative error, Baird's cavalry, consisting of three regiments, was shipped last and did not reach Spain until three weeks after the rest of the force landed. By 23 November, Moore's infantry was concentrated in the vicinity of Salamanca; Baird was at Astorga but still without his cavalry; and Hope, with Moore's cavalry and guns, was still far off near the Escorial.

While the British Army was thus advancing into Spain in six separate columns,[8] the Spanish generals, instead of concentrating their forces or making any attempt to co-ordinate their plans with the British, offered battle in the rashest manner imaginable. There was never any doubt about the

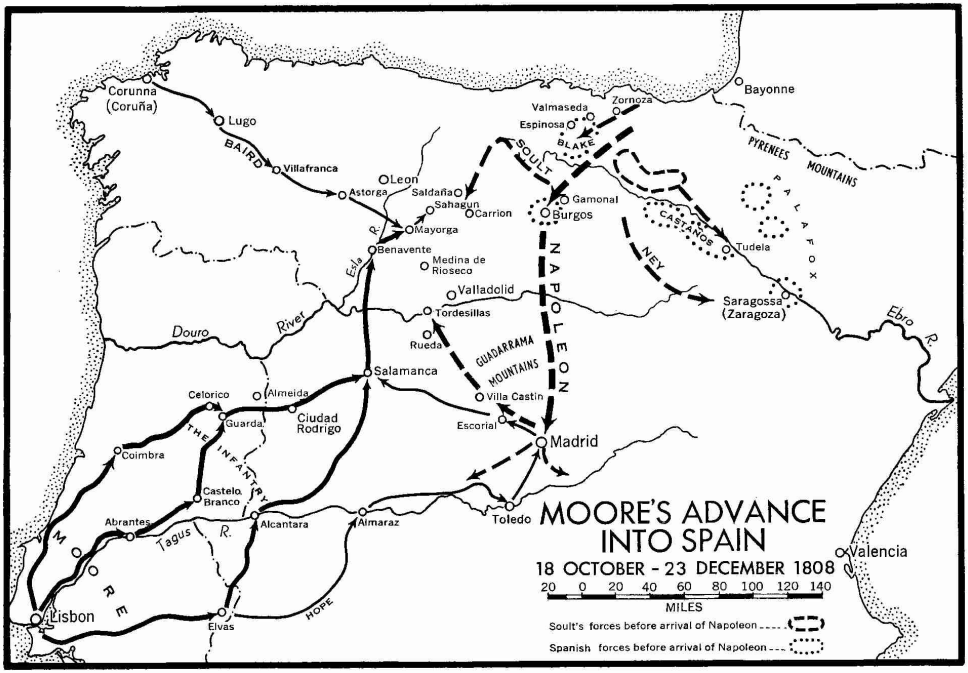
result. Napoleon himself crossed the frontier at Bayonne on 4 November, but even before this, Blake's army on the Spanish left had been decisively beaten on 29 October at Zornoza. Belvedere was routed at Gamonal on 10 November and the following day Blake's force received a second heavy reverse at Espinosa. With these defeats the Spanish left had, for the moment, virtually ceased to exist. On the Spanish centre, Castaños was severely defeated at Tudela on 23 November, and his force too ceased to be an effective fighting organization. The defeat of Castaños meant, moreover, that the road to Madrid was open, and accordingly the French Emperor moved into this city on 4 December almost without a fight.

Even so, the French were not without difficulties of their own. Food, forage, and supplies of all kinds were scarce, while the defeat of the Spanish armies, by reinforcing the irregular guerrilla bands, had merely spread the fire rather than extinguished it. Small French detachments were so frequently ambushed that before long Napoleon had to order that his own dispatches would always be accompanied by a force of not less than twenty-five French cavalry. At the time, however, none of these difficulties seemed serious to the French who were preparing for the systematic reduction of resistance in the rest of Spain. The Emperor now believed that the British Army was retreating to the coast, and he was content for the time being to let it go.

On 22 November, Sir David Baird at Astorga received word of the Spanish defeats at Espinosa and Gamonal. He at once perceived that the Spanish armies, which he had thought were covering his front, no longer afforded him any protection and that, if the French continued to move westwards, his own force of 9000 infantry would be in a position of great danger. Baird, therefore, immediately halted and, sending a report of the situation to Moore, began to make preparations for a retreat to Corunna.

At Salamanca throughout all this period Moore had no recourse but to wait until the rest of his infantry, his cavalry and guns under Hope, and his reinforcements under Baird should arrive. Until they did so, he could hardly be said to have an army. This, however, was not Moore's only worry. From his headquarters in Salamanca the military situation began to look very different from its appearance in Lisbon. In spite of his best efforts, Moore was unable to find any responsible Spanish general with whom he could co-operate, nor was he able to obtain reliable intelligence either of the enemy or of his allies. As it turned out, all his infantry except two battalions was assembled at Salamanca by 28 November, but on this day Moore heard of the Spanish defeat at Tudela and at once determined to retreat into Portugal.

Accordingly he ordered Hope to hasten north to join him and directed Baird to retire on Corunna.



On the morning of the 29th, Moore curtly communicated this resolve to his generals and his own staff, telling them that he did not seek their advice but had merely assembled them to give them his instructions. The brusqueness of Moore's tone on this, as on other occasions at Salamanca, was in sharp contrast to his habitual easy charm and was, perhaps, indicative of the tension and foreboding which must have pressed in upon him during this difficult period of inactivity.[9]

Moore's decision to retreat came as a sharp disappointment to the entire army. Officers and men alike freely expressed their discontent, and even Moore's generals criticized their commander. Indeed such a reaction, however deplorable, was not unnatural. The British Army was in good spirits and ready for a fight; its lines of retreat were open and were not threatened; it had not yet approached within 80 miles of any considerable body of French troops nor had there been even so much as a clash of outposts. Moreover, Spanish forces were still in the field, and Madrid was reported to be preparing itself for a desperate defence.

Nevertheless Moore was unmoved by such considerations. He began to send back his sick and his stores, although he delayed the movement of his main body in the hope that he might still effect a junction with his long-lost cavalry and guns. On 30 November Baird began his retirement, while Hope, by forced marches in close order, hurried to join Moore at Salamanca. This junction was effected on 4 December, and for the first time since setting out from Lisbon, Moore at last had a balanced force under his control.

The instructions for the British retreat, which had been issued on 28 and 29 November, remained in force for six days. During this time Moore received no accurate information of Napoleon's movements, but strong representations were made to him to cancel his orders for withdrawal. If the officers of Moore's army disapproved of the orders, even more opposed was Hookham Frere, the British Ambassador in Spain. Frere's position was that the British Army had been sent into Spain to help the Spanish people regain their independence and that a retreat now, before so much as a shot had been fired, would be for Britain to abandon an ally in a despicable manner. This point of view, by no means unreasonable in itself, Frere repeatedly expressed to Moore in the most undiplomatic language. At the same time the British general was besieged by pleas from the Spaniards to aid in the forthcoming defence of Madrid, either by marching to the relief of that city or by making a diversion against the flank and rear of the French. Unfortunately, both Frere and the supreme *Junta* accompanied their proposals and sought to substantiate their arguments by exaggerated reports of Spanish military strength which Moore very frequently knew to be false.

On the evening of 5 December, however, Moore changed his mind about retreating and countermanded his orders to Baird. There were a number of reasons for this dramatic change of plan. Most important certainly was the diplomatic pressure exerted by Frere. Weight was lent to Frere's arguments by the fact that the Spanish general, La Romana, had written from Leon on 30 November offering Moore a corps of 15,000 Spaniards for use in a joint action against the French. Nor was Moore unaware of the damage to his own and Britain's reputation which would result if Madrid should by chance hold out as Saragossa had done the previous June, while the British Army, instead of doing anything to aid such resistance, tamely retired from Spain. The British commander had several reports that Madrid was preparing for a stiff defence, and although he was far from believing them, neither could he afford to ignore them. Additional considerations were that his army was now complete except for Baird's force; that he now knew there was no major body of French troops in front of either himself or Baird; and that the Emperor was concentrating everything on Madrid. At this time, too, Moore

believed that the total French forces in Spain did not number more than 80,000.

Yet Moore was in no doubt as to the risky nature of his new resolve. As he wrote to Baird from Salamanca on 6 December: “. . . what is passing at Madrid may be decisive of the fate of Spain . . . but if the bubble bursts and Madrid falls we shall have a run for it . . .”[10]

The Advance from Salamanca to Sahagun

Baird had retired as far as Villafranca, three days’ journey from Astorga, when Moore’s new orders reached him. He at once turned about and started back the way he had come, but he had thus lost six marches to no purpose, and his troops were already falling into that surly frame of mind which is generally induced by apparently needless counter-marching. On 11 December, although Moore had already received word of the fall of Madrid, the British infantry began to move out from Salamanca. In actual fact, of course, they were too late by more than a week. With the capitulation of Madrid on the 4th, Napoleon’s central reserve was free for other employment and the British move, which, had it been timely, might have been effective, was now too late to save the capital.

At first Moore planned merely to conduct a raid against Valladolid or Burgos, but on 14 December he received an intercepted dispatch written by Berthier to Soult which revealed to him for the first time the actual dispositions of the French. Moore now learned that Soult, with some 15,000 or 16,000 troops, was in a dangerously exposed position at Saldaña and Carrion, while the rest of the French forces were concentrated far to the south. Therefore, on 15 December Moore gave orders for the Army to turn north instead of continuing eastward. It was his hope that he could catch Soult by surprise and administer a sharp defeat to this isolated French corps before being forced to fall back. Since the total British force under Moore and Baird was about 25,000 men, there could be no doubt about the result if Soult could be forced to battle. Four brisk marches brought Moore’s army on 20 December to Mayorga where the junction with Baird was finally effected.

Up till now, there had been only minor cavalry engagements between the British and the French, at Rueda on 12 December and at Valladolid on the 15th. On 20 December, however, Lord Paget led two British cavalry regiments by a night march to Sahagun where he delivered a surprise attack on Soult’s main guard. This brilliant little action was completely successful. The French lost 170 prisoners, 20 dead, and many wounded for a British

loss of only 14 men. Yet the attack, although an unqualified tactical success, warned Soult of his danger, with the result that the French general immediately began to concentrate his two divisions at Carrion and to call for support from other quarters.

When Moore arrived at Sahagun on 21 December, he decided to rest his infantry for 48 hours, then to march during the night of the 23rd-24th, and deliver his attack against Soult on the following morning. As darkness fell on 23 December the leading British regiments were already stepping briskly out on the hard-frozen road to Carrion when new orders reached them. They were commanded first to halt and then to march back the way they had come.

The Retreat to Corunna

This was the beginning of the long retreat to Corunna. The reason for the change of plan was that on the early evening of 23 December Moore had received word from La Romana that Napoleon was already crossing the Guadarrama Mountains. It was indeed time to retire. The Emperor, who had heard on the 19th that Moore was loose in Old Castile, had at once acted with furious energy. He had collected the central reserve at Madrid, together with what other troops lay at hand, some 80,000 in all, and had directed this force over the two passes of the Guadarrama upon Tordesillas and Medina de Rioseco. At the same time aides-de-camp were sent galloping north to order portions of Junot's corps to place themselves under the command of Soult. Thus Napoleon hoped to cut the British Army's line of retreat, to catch it between his hammer and Soult's anvil, and then to administer so crushing a defeat that Britain would be forced to abandon all interference in continental affairs.

Marching in the van of the striking force from Madrid, Ney's corps was across the Guadarrama during the night of 21 December and by the morning of the 22nd was in Villa Castin on the north side of the mountains. On this day, however, the weather broke. The whole countryside was struck by a wild blizzard which piled drifts across the roads and choked the mountain passes with snow. Napoleon was three times assured that the roads over the mountains were impassable for his army, but, in contrast to Moore at Lisbon, he refused to believe this intelligence. Instead he placed himself on foot at the head of the Guard and led the way over the snow-bound passes on the 23rd, just as he had done long ago when as General Bonaparte he had led the Army of Reserve through the Great St. Bernard to Marengo. By 25 December the Emperor with his cavalry advanced guard had pressed on as

far as Tordesillas where he was forced to wait for 24 hours for his infantry to catch up.

Meanwhile, on 24 December, Moore began his retreat from Sahagun. The Reserve Division under Major-General E. Paget[11] and the two light brigades remained in the town until the next day to cover the retirement, while the British cavalry pressed in on Soult as though they were preparing the way for an attack.

The army was already in an ugly mood. The regiments which had been ordered back from the road to Carrion had thrown down their muskets when they had been ordered to halt and retire. Now the British were falling back to Astorga, disappointed in their hopes of a battle and bitterly complaining that "the General intended to march them to death first and to fight after".[12] Yet they still believed that a battle was coming. Moore had told La Romana that he intended to make a stand at Astorga where there were very strong defensive positions. This news had somehow filtered down to the troops and it did something to keep up their spirits.

For the next few days the British Army retreated virtually unmolested. On 26 December Baird was over the Esla at Valencia de Don Juan and by the evening of the 27th everything, including the rear guard, had crossed that river. This unhindered withdrawal was very largely due to the splendid work of the British cavalry under Lord Paget. They fought frequently, on both the 26th and 27th, against superior numbers of French horse and were invariably successful. Among the main body, however, the disorders and undisciplined behaviour which were to disgrace the later stages of the retreat had already begun, and there were serious outbreaks of plundering on 26 December at Mayorga, Valderas and Benavente.

On the 28th Moore rested his troops at Benavente for 24 hours, but pushed them on again towards Astorga the following day. A cavalry skirmish at Castro Gonzalo on the 29th again ended in a British success, and on the same day Moore's main body marched into Astorga. Here the troops were hastily issued with what new equipment could be distributed, but, owing to the urgency of the withdrawal and to the lack of transport, the majority of the stores were ordered destroyed. When the soldiers saw this being done, they broke ranks and helped themselves to anything they could lay their hands on. Unfortunately, there was a considerable amount of rum in the depot and before long bands of drunken soldiers were roaming the streets and looting private houses. Consequently, a great many stragglers were left behind when the regiments moved out.

Until now the British Army had still been approximately 25,000 strong, for so far there had been virtually no straggling. However, La Romana's unfortunate corps, which converged simultaneously on Astorga, was in much worse condition. The Spanish rearguard had been overrun by Soult; an outbreak of typhus was raging among the troops; and the Spanish commander was able to muster no more than 9000-10,000 ragged, starving men.

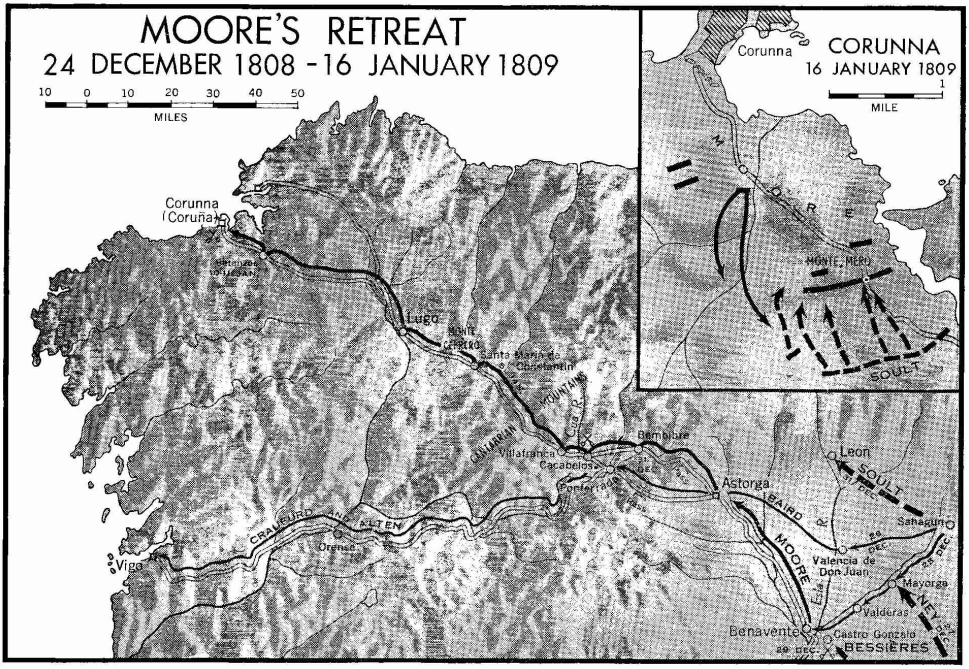
Nevertheless, La Romana was all for stopping and fighting. He argued—what was most true—that the passes just behind Astorga provided a very strong defensive position and one, moreover, which could not easily be turned. Yet Moore, who did not for a moment forget that he was being pursued, not by one of the French marshals, but by Napoleon himself, had not the least intention of adopting this suggestion. So little did Moore consider making a stand at Astorga that on the 30th he was already sending Baird's, Fraser's, and Hope's divisions on to Villafranca, while Paget's reserve and the two light brigades were hurried after them on the 31st. This retreat was so precipitate that 400 British sick were abandoned at Astorga to fall into French hands.

When he left Astorga, Moore still had not made up his mind whether he would retreat by the highroad to Corunna or whether he would embark at Vigo. As we can see from his letters to Castlereagh,[13] this indecision lasted until he reached Lugo on 6 January. Yet just after the army abandoned Astorga, Moore sent Robert Craufurd's Light Brigade and Alten's brigade of the King's German Legion along the road Astorga-Ponferrada-Orense to Vigo. Thus, in the January weather, 3500 excellent troops retreated unpursued through a barren countryside along a badly-kept secondary road on which not a single magazine had been established, only to embark unmolested at Vigo and take no further part in the campaign. After Astorga, the rearguard, which up till now had been commanded by Craufurd, was composed of Paget's Reserve Division and one regiment of hussars.

Moore had reasoned that the same difficulties of weather, transport, and the provision of food and forage which beset the British Army would soon begin to trouble the French, and from this he concluded that he was unlikely to be molested after the rear of his army had passed Villafranca. In this sanguine expectation he was deceived. Yet the pursuit noticeably slackened after Astorga, and, indeed, the French infantry did not reach this town until New Year's Day, thirty-six hours after the British had left. Here Napoleon, having no wish to become personally involved in a campaign which no longer promised to be decisive, handed over the task of pursuing Moore to

Soult. At Astorga, too, the Emperor began to disperse much of that great mass of troops which he had assembled and led into the north-west of Spain. Soult continued on the track of the British with 25,000 infantry and 6000 cavalry, while Ney's corps, 16,000 strong, followed some two marches in the rear. Thus there were still approximately 47,000 French on the heels of Moore's army.

Although the British had a considerable start over their pursuers, the French columns moving out of Astorga were able to see with a deadly clarity which way Moore had gone. The road from Astorga runs uphill for the first twelve miles and both sides of this path were littered with abandoned wagons, dead oxen and mules, and dead and exhausted stragglers. The British Army had begun to go to pieces.



On New Year's Eve at Bembibre the wine depot was ransacked by the troops and an orgy ensued which lasted all night. When the army marched out of the town, nearly 1000 men were left behind, too drunk to move. Paget's rearguard, which arrived the next afternoon, tried without much success to rally the stragglers and get them on the road again, but even on the morning of 2 January Bembibre was still full of drunken British soldiers. On mid-morning of this day the pursuing French dragoons burst through the

last British cavalry pickets and thundered down the main street of Bembibre, slashing right and left with their sabres at soldiers who were often still so intoxicated that they could not even stagger out of the way.

This deplorable indiscipline affected the greater part of the Army and was undoubtedly responsible for many of the worst features of the retreat. A few regiments managed to preserve order in their ranks—notably the Guards, Robert Craufurd's Light Brigade and Paget's rearguard. It is instructive to note the different reasons for the good discipline of these various troops. The rearguard's morale remained high because of its many successful encounters with the French; the Guards, a more select body than most of the Army, were also better trained; Craufurd's brigade, officers and men alike, were kept to their duty by the iron hand of their commander, and Craufurd's task was undoubtedly made the easier by the fact that Moore had trained the Light Brigade so well at Shorncliffe five years before. Yet many other regiments, which were exposed to exactly the same hardships, were to lose between 30 and 40 per cent of their effectives. This breakdown may in part be attributed to the fact that the officers often did not exert themselves to control their men, to previous faults of discipline and training, to the recruiting policy of the British Government which tended to make the army the repository of the most shiftless and criminal elements of the population, to the Army's bitter disappointment at not coming to grips with the French, and to that frustrating sense of muddle and confusion which had been induced by countermanded orders and much seemingly purposeless marching.

When the Army reached Villafranca on 1 January the scenes at Bembibre were re-enacted. There were fourteen days' provisions in the town, including rum, but since there was no transport, the greater part of these stores were ordered to be destroyed. Again, the troops broke into the magazines and again they got into the rum. Then they went through the town breaking into private houses, looting, raping and murdering.

Paget's rearguard had in the meanwhile halted at Cacabelos and taken up a most favourable defensive position behind the River Cua. Since there was no outflanking road by which this position could be turned, a stand here by the main body could undoubtedly have delayed Soult at least until Ney came up from Astorga. Moore, however, had no thought of checking the retreat, and Paget's rearguard fought only to gain the time required for the destruction of the stores at Villafranca. The French attacked precipitately on 3 January, but after a sharp engagement in which both sides lost about 200 men, the French withdrew. Paget retired without difficulty during the night.

Now began the most difficult portion of the whole retreat. Between Villafranca and Lugo the country is desolate, bare, and rugged, and consists of a series of very steep hills. Moore drove his army on so rapidly that now only the strongest could keep up. Before Villafranca, the most undisciplined elements of the army, the drunkards and the looters, had been left behind, but now steady old soldiers also began to fall out of the ranks and to die by the wayside. Hundreds of the cavalry horses, too, now began to founder, and all along the road over those terrible hills there could be heard, above the moans and curses of the dying, the sharp cracking of the hussars' pistols as they shot their mounts. On 5 January Moore pushed the army relentlessly along for thirty-six continuous hours, losing as many men in the process as though he had fought a major engagement. Yet every time the rearguard made a stand in one of the many good defensive positions available, the French pursuit was halted.

Of necessity the British sick and wounded now began to be left behind to die in the snow as the oxen which drew the ambulance wagons could not keep up the pace and dropped from exhaustion. In the wake of the army, all along the white stretch of road which led across the crown of Monte Cebrero, the snow was dotted with dead redcoats, while interspersed among them were pathetic groups of dead and dying women and children, the families and the camp-followers who had somehow managed to come this far but who could now go no farther. Most of the baggage train was lost between Villafranca and Lugo, as well as the military chest containing £25,000 in silver dollars. General Paget, angrily refusing to fight a rearguard action to cover the slow progress of the ox-cart carrying the treasure, ordered the chests to be broken open and their contents thrown over a precipice.

At Santa Maria de Constantin on 5 January, when the rearguard made a brief stand behind a destroyed bridge, the French cavalry were very circumspect. They felt out the position, but wisely did not attempt to attack. Later the French infantry arrived on the scene, and an assault was launched, only to be beaten back with loss. Paget's troops retired without difficulty when darkness fell.

On 6 January, Moore halted his army at Lugo. Here he finally made up his mind to retire on Corunna and he sent a dispatch to the British Admiral at Vigo requesting that the transports which were assembled there should move to the more northerly port. The 25,000 were now only 19,000 strong, but as word spread that a battle was in the offing, the stragglers began to flock back to the colours. The depleted ranks began to fill with ragged,

savage men who asked nothing more than a chance to fight the French. Soult, however, refused to oblige them. On 7 January he did nothing more than explore the British positions while he waited for Ney's corps to come up. Again on the 8th the British were disappointed in their hopes of a battle, and when night fell they sullenly resumed their retreat, after shooting 500 of their horses which could not continue and destroying the food that could not be carried.

The night of 8-9 January was one of impenetrable darkness and driving rain. As the troops moved out of their battle positions to seek their places in column on the highroad, entire regiments and brigades lost their way and fumbled about in the darkness, marching all night only to find themselves in the morning some four or five miles from their starting point. Paget's Reserve Division alone kept its bearings and reached the highroad at the correct place. The scene was one of great confusion. There were stragglers everywhere, and drenched and exhausted men were scattered about the countryside under what cover they could find. Nevertheless the Army was formed up and marched off in the morning.

From this point on the looting began in earnest. There was hardly a Spanish home in the path of the British Army which was not violated by marauders. In the rearguard Paget's regiments kept their order and were always prepared to present a front to the enemy, but most of the rest of the army was little more than a mob by the time it reached Betanzos. One regiment, when it marched into that town, had with its colours only nine officers, three sergeants, and three privates.

Soult, however, pursued less rapidly than the British retreated. Indeed the French did not catch up until Moore's army was forced to wait at Corunna for its transports to arrive from Vigo. During part of the night of 9-10 January, Moore pressed the British retreat, and during that one night more than a thousand soldiers were lost, either being captured by the French or dying by the way from cold and exhaustion. On the morning of the 10th the army reached Betanzos on the sea coast. As they straggled down from the high hills to the sea, the British soldiers found themselves in what seemed to be another world. Walled gardens and fenced fields took the place of the desolate mountain wilderness through which they had passed. The coastal air was bright and mild; the orange and lemon trees were in blossom; the rye was ripe; and, best of all to the weary soldiers, they could glimpse, sparkling in the distance ahead, the sunlit sea. Now they were only twelve miles away from their port of embarkation, and their long ordeal seemed at

last to be over. On the night of the 11th the main body marched into Corunna.

Moore watched them straggle in, shoeless, ragged and dispirited, but he was somewhat cheered when he saw afar off a different looking body of troops. “Those must be the Guards”, he said. And sure enough, along came the two battalions of the First Guards, each still 800 strong, marching in step in column of sections with their drums beating them on and their drum-major in front twirling his staff with as much swagger as though they were marching down Pall Mall.[14] Not all the Army had succumbed to the psychology of defeat.

The Battle of Corunna

However, even with their arrival at Corunna, the difficulties of the British were not yet over. The hoped-for transports, which had been ordered up so belatedly from Vigo, had found adverse winds in the Atlantic and had been unable to beat their way into Corunna harbour. There was nothing to do now but wait until the ships arrived. Paget’s rearguard took up a position behind a blown bridge four miles away, but the French did not cross in force until the 13th. New muskets and cartridges were issued to the entire army from the Corunna arsenal, and then the powder magazine was blown up. On the 14th the transports sailed into the bay.

Moore at once began getting his sick and wounded, his guns and his cavalry aboard, but more than 2000 horses and oxen were not fit to make the voyage and had to be destroyed. When the cavalry and most of the guns were embarked, there were only approximately 15,000 men left to beat off Soult’s impending attack.

Immediately south of Corunna there are three lines of hills, any one of which was suitable for a defensive position. The two most advanced ridges, however, were too extensive to be held by Moore’s depleted force, and therefore the British made their stand on Monte Mero, the third ridge only two miles outside the walls of the town. This high ground suffered from two disadvantages. In the first place, the western end of the ridge was commanded at extreme range by cannon-fire from the next most southerly height, and secondly, at the foot of this portion of the position there was an expanse of open ground by which the British right flank could be turned. In order to counteract this second disadvantage Moore placed one-third of his army to defend his exposed right wing, but there was nothing he could do about the long-range French fire from the opposite ridge. When a French

battery was posted on this height, it was to cause many casualties in the British ranks, and Moore himself was to be among them.

On the 15th Soult very cautiously occupied the two southerly ridges. He had some 20,000 troops at his disposal, a superiority in numbers which he felt would be sufficient to compensate for the strength of the British position. His plan was to contain the British left and centre with holding attacks while the main blow would be struck around the British right. This movement, if successful, would cut off the larger part of the British force from the sea. Therefore at 1:30 on the afternoon of 16 January, more than four days after the British had reached Corunna, Soult opened his attack.

The French attacks on the left and centre were not pressed with any determination, but heavy fighting soon developed around the western foot of Monte Mero. However, the British infantry, because of the weight of their fire, managed to hold their position and even to advance somewhat. At the same time, farther to the west, Paget's division moved down to block the main French turning movement. The ground in this area was extremely broken and was sub-divided by numerous stone walls, a fortunate circumstance for the British since it made the French cavalry virtually useless. After some severe and confused fighting on the extreme right wing of the British Army, the French were again forced back.

Mid-way through the course of the engagement, Sir John Moore, who had been exposing himself most freely all the afternoon,[15] was struck on his left shoulder by a roundshot. It was at once apparent that the wound was mortal, and accordingly the command devolved on Hope, for Baird had been seriously wounded earlier in the day. As twilight fell the French attacks petered out, and by the time it was full night each army was back in substantially its original position.

Whatever scope the battle of Corunna and the death of Sir John Moore have afforded to the poet,[16] there is little about the engagement which is of interest to the student of tactics. A somewhat superior attacking force assailed a strong defensive position, was repulsed, and fell back to its starting point. There is no doubt, however, that Corunna was a British victory, for after the battle the French were unable to interfere with the embarkation of the British Army. The casualties of the battle are difficult to estimate, but it seems probable that the British lost between 700 and 800 men and the French rather more.

That night at nine o'clock the British infantry withdrew from their battle positions on Monte Mero, and the embarkation was at once begun. By the

evening of the 17th all the British Army, except one brigade which remained behind as a rearguard, was aboard the transports. The rearguard embarked without incident on the 18th, and the fleet put out to sea. The Spanish garrison held out in the Citadel of Corunna until the ships were safely away and then surrendered.

On the homeward voyage the British transports ran into bad weather and, being scattered by the storm, put in at various ports along the English coast. Two ships sank with a further loss of 273 soldiers. On their arrival in England 3000 men, who were suffering from wounds and sickness, were admitted to hospital.

The actual loss in the Peninsula during Sir John Moore's campaign has been estimated as approximately 6000 men out of the 25,000 engaged.[17] The British had been forced to evacuate Spain; the British Army had sustained a major disaster; Joseph was once more reigning in Madrid; and the Spanish people, especially those living along Moore's line of march, can have retained little affection for their British ally.

So much for the debit side of Sir John Moore's campaign. The facts speak eloquently for themselves. On the credit side also, however, many arguments have been advanced, purporting to show that certain very considerable, though intangible, benefits resulted to the British cause from the campaign. At the time it was claimed by the British Government, and the claim has almost invariably been repeated by British historians,[18] that Moore's dash on Sahagun upset Napoleon's whole plan of action in the Peninsula and that Spain was thereby given three months of valuable respite. This, it is said, was sufficient to change the entire course of the war. Moreover, it is pointed out that the French force which was to have marched on Lisbon was diverted to the pursuit of the British and, as a consequence, the Portuguese capital was never entered.

In any case, there was to be another British Army in the Peninsula in three months' time. Sir Arthur Wellesley, in whose conduct of the summer campaign the Court of Enquiry could find no fault, was to command this new expedition, and the military exploits of this force were to be beyond the reach of controversy.

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[1] These corps were commanded respectively by Victor, Bessières, Moncey, Lefebvre, St. Cyr, Mortier, Ney and Junot.

[2] *Diary of Sir John Moore*, ed. by Maj-Gen. Sir J. F. Maurice, (London, 1904), II, 273.

[3] Oman, I. 490.

[4] A British detachment had already travelled from Lisbon to Almeida to receive the surrender of the fortress there, and the roads from the capital must have been traversed, at least for some distance, by British couriers, foraging parties, etc. The Portuguese for their part might have been expected to be familiar with the conditions in their own country. Yet in fact both the British and the Portuguese were wrong; the roads were good enough to take guns. Nor can Moore be absolved from all blame for accepting so easily the advice that they were not.

[5] *Diary*, II, 276.

[6] Oman, II, 495.

[7] *Ibid.*, 496.

[8] The sixth column was Baird's cavalry under Lord Paget, which on 23 November was between Lugo and Astorga.

[9] On 20 November Moore had written to Lady Hester Stanhope, an old friend and the niece of the late William Pitt: "If I can extricate myself and those with me from our present difficulties, and if I can beat the French I shall return to you with satisfaction; but if not, it will be better that I should never quit Spain." (Carola Oman, *Sir John Moore*, (London, 1953), 536.)

[10] *Diary*, II, 303.

[11] Not to be confused with Lord Paget, the British cavalry commander.

[12] *Memoir of 'T.S.' of the 71st Highlanders*, 53. Quoted in Oman, I, 546.

[13] Oman, I, 564*n*. On 13 January 1809 Moore wrote to Castlereagh: ". . . at Lugo I became sensible of the impossibility of reaching Vigo, which is at too great a distance".

[14] Sir John Fortescue, *British Regiments*, (London, 1934), 8.

[15] Colonel Thomas Graham, a member of Moore's staff, was to remember in later years "not only the animation, but the almost boyish gaiety" of Moore's countenance during the battle, and as he was dying, Moore whispered to a friend who was kneeling by his mattress: "Anderson! You know what I have always wished to die this way." (Carola Oman, *op. cit.*, 599.)

[16] Fifteen years after the event an English curate, Charles Wolfe, with more than a little poetic license, immortalized the burial of Sir John Moore in the verses beginning:

> Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
> As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
> Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
> O'er the grave where our hero was buried.

[17] Oman, I, Appendix XIII, 648, places the figure at 5998, but in actual fact this figure may well be much too low. To arrive at this estimate Oman has deducted the 296 casualties by shipwreck in Corunna Harbour and off the English coast, 589 stragglers who ultimately escaped individually to Portugal, 400 convalescents who were later released from French captivity by the Spaniards, and all of the sick who had been discharged to Portugal from Salamanca. Moreover, this estimate of casualties is arrived at by deducting the debarkation returns from the strength of Moore's army as of 19 December, and therefore the 3000 casualties admitted to hospital in England are not included.

[18] *Cf.*, Napier, I, 501, *et seq*; Fortescue, VI, 395; Oman, I, 598, and II, 1.

Chapter IV

The Campaign of 1809

The Spanish Efforts

Since this is primarily an account of the British Army in the Peninsular War, it is unfortunately not possible to describe in any detail those aspects of the conflict with which the British were not directly concerned. All that can be done is to sketch in enough of the Spanish background to enable the British operations to be seen in their true perspective.

However, in spite of all the manifest faults displayed in the Spanish conduct of the war, in spite of the repeated defeats of the Spanish forces in the field, and in spite of the incompetence, intrigue, and venality which so often marred Spanish politics, it should be remembered that there were nevertheless always more Spaniards under arms than there were British troops in the Peninsula;[1] that, for by far the greater part of the war, many more French troops were deployed against the Spaniards than against the British;[2] and that the casualties inflicted on the French by the British amounted to only a fraction of the total French loss in the Peninsula. To admit this is in no way to belittle the decisive nature of the British intervention, nor to detract in the slightest from the credit which very properly accrues to the British Army under Wellesley. On the contrary, it is the more remarkable that so small a force could, because of its own excellence and the sure judgement of its commander, be instrumental in achieving such large results.

Yet the most important single factor in the Peninsular War undoubtedly was that in Spain the French were for the first time opposed not only by armies in the field but also by a people in arms. Napoleon's troops never subdued Spain. They never at any time held more of that country than the ground on which they were encamped. Whenever a French general marched out from his own district, he ventured into the unknown with only what information his advanced guard could glean to aid him. Invariably, too, the passing of his rearguard was the signal for insurrection to break out behind him. One of Soult's officers compared the march of the 2nd Corps through Galicia in the spring of 1809 ". . . to the progress of a ship on the high seas: she cleaves the waves, but they close behind her, and in a few moments all

trace of her passage has disappeared".[3] The same could be said with equal truth about every French expedition in Spain.

The result of all this was that, despite the magnitude of their effort, the French never had enough troops in the Peninsula to carry out the tasks set by the Emperor. Communications, moreover, were rendered extremely difficult. French generals quite commonly went for weeks without any word of the victory or defeat, or even of the whereabouts, of forces supposedly co-operating with them. The French were denied virtually all information save what they could obtain themselves, while a little later the British, thanks to Wellesley's organization and to the co-operation of the Spaniards, possessed an excellent intelligence service. The continuous French casualties were a drain on both their material and their spiritual resources. The wounded, the sick, foraging parties, supply trains and couriers were sniped at and ambushed incessantly, and when French prisoners were captured, they were frequently tortured. French soldiers were poisoned in taverns and were strangled in their sleep, and the knife or the garotte brought silent death to the isolated sentry or the solitary messenger. Very naturally the French replied in kind. They would, in reprisal, sack a convent, burn a village, or disembowel a priest, but instead of intimidating the Spaniards, these measures only deepened their hatred of the invader. This quality of ferocity, characteristic of the type of warfare waged in Spain, was in significant contrast to the chivalry and courtesy which so often distinguished British-French relations. Yet undoubtedly the Spanish resistance to the invaders of their homeland lowered French morale, facilitated the reconquest of the Peninsula, and, by providing an example to the Russians and the Germans, contributed substantially to the liberation of Europe.

In almost every part of Spain the year 1809 was marked by numerous actions against the French. Although virtually every one of these individual encounters ended disastrously for the Spaniards, the sum total at the end of the year was far more disastrous for the Napoleonic cause. The battles between the Spaniards and the French in late 1808 and 1809 were not linked by any master plan, but occurred haphazardly throughout the country whenever a Spanish commander felt strong enough to oppose the invaders. On the very day when the French Emperor had set out in pursuit of Sir John Moore, 21 December 1808, the second siege of Saragossa began. Palafox, the Spanish commander, conducted a desperate defence until 21 February 1809. After the besiegers had broken into the walls of the city, bitter street fighting protracted the battle for weeks. Before Saragossa surrendered, 54,000 Spaniards died within the town, and Lannes, the French commander, was appalled to find that the French Army had lost 10,000 men in capturing

the city.[4] Also in Aragon, at Alcañiz on the Guadalope River, on 23 May, the Spanish general Blake defeated Suchet who had assumed his command only two days previously. In this engagement the French lost nearly 800 men and fled in panic, but Suchet in his turn defeated Blake on 15 June at Maria and again at Belchite on 18 June. Suchet, who was created a marshal in 1811, seldom again had serious trouble in the provinces under his command. Of all the French marshals he alone was able in some measure to placate as well as to defeat the Spaniards.

In Galicia on 19 March, La Romana captured Villafranca and took over 1000 French prisoners, while on 22 May the French garrison at Santiago capitulated to Carrera with a loss of 600 men and two guns. On 24 May in Asturias Ballesteros captured Santander with its garrison of 600 Frenchmen, and, although Ballesteros was subsequently heavily defeated by Bonnet at Santander on 12 June, the French nevertheless abandoned Asturias.

In central Spain in January the Duke of Infantado marched toward Madrid with a considerable force, but because he allowed the French time to concentrate, was unable to offer battle. Consequently, the revolt of the small towns in the plains was easily and ruthlessly suppressed. After Jourdan stormed Chinchon, for instance, all the male inhabitants of the place were massacred. The Spanish general, Venegas, who had some 11,000 troops under his command, was defeated by Victor at Ucles on 13 January, following which the French sacked the town and shot 69 prominent citizens. Some idea of the ferocity with which this war was waged may be gained by the fact that when the Spaniards who were taken prisoner at Ucles were marched back to Madrid, Marshal Victor ordered all those who could not keep up with the main column to be shot. This order was carried out, and each day of the march some thirty sick or wounded Spaniards were executed by the French. A Spanish Army was defeated at Ciudad Real on 27 March and the following day General Cuesta was beaten at Medellin. With every such success, however, ultimate victory seemed only more distant than ever to the French. Jourdan was probably right when he commented bitterly: “In any other country of Europe the gaining of two such successes as Medellin and Ciudad Real would have reduced the countryside to submission and have enabled the victorious armies to press forward to new conquests.”[5] In Spain these defeats merely encouraged the rest of the population to take up arms.

In Catalonia meanwhile, a Spanish army had been defeated at Molins de Rey in December 1808, and the town of Rosas fell after a gallant defence in which a group of British sailors under Lord Cochrane took part. After the

siege of Rosas, St. Cyr marched to the relief of Barcelona, defeating the Spaniards at Cardadeu on the way. The major event in Catalonia in 1809, however, was the siege of Gerona which began on 30 May. The Spanish commander of this town, Alvarez de Castro, was both a highly competent soldier and a very determined man. Towards the end of the siege, when the Spanish soldiers and the civilian inhabitants were alike dying in hundreds from starvation, one of his officers dared to suggest to Alvarez that capitulation was inevitable. The old general replied: “When the last food is gone we will start eating the cowards, and we will begin with you.” The siege of Gerona lasted longer and was of a more desperate nature even than the siege of Saragossa. Although at the outset the French captured a commanding height above the fortress and made wide breaches in the walls, their successive attempts to storm the place met with one bloody repulse after another. As the days drew out into weeks and the weeks into months, dysentery, malaria, and sunstroke added to the French casualties. St. Cyr, who had begun the siege, was superseded by Augereau, but still the Spaniards held out. It was not until 10 December, 1809, when Alvarez lay unconscious and near death with a fever, that the 3000 surviving defenders surrendered. Nearly one-half of the civil population had perished from starvation, sickness, and the incessant shelling, but in this case the French losses had been even more severe. Fourteen thousand French soldiers became casualties before the walls of Gerona.[6]

In the autumn, however, a ray of hope was vouchsafed to Spain when at Tamames the French general, Marchand, was sharply defeated by Del Parque with a loss of 1400 men. This was the most noteworthy Spanish victory since Baylen and it did much to encourage the insurgents. Only a month later, however, Soult was victorious over Areizaga at Ocaña.

In view of their extremely heavy losses and their complete inability either to subdue the insurrection or to break the spirit of the Spaniards, the French undoubtedly would have been dissatisfied with the campaigns of 1809 even if they had had only the Spaniards to deal with. But to understand the full extent of the French difficulties we must now go back to review the campaign which had been fought that summer by the British Army.

Wellesley Returns to the Peninsula

Between January, when Moore’s force embarked at Corunna, and the end of April, 1809, the British Army in Portugal under Sir John Cradock did nothing. Although by March it had already reached a strength of some 16,000 men, the army remained passively encamped about Lisbon. Soult in

the meantime had moved down to invade Portugal and had captured Oporto in the middle of March. Here, however, the French advance bogged down. Soult was completely out of touch with Marshal Ney who had his hands full trying to maintain order in Galicia and Leon. Moreover, it was more than two months since Soult had received a dispatch from the Emperor. Consequently, the French marshal stayed in Oporto, refitting his army and dreaming of a kingdom which he hoped his Imperial master might be induced to carve out for him in northern Portugal. Ever since Murat, who was married to Caroline Bonaparte, had been made King of Naples, this vision of a crown was to haunt the Napoleonic marshals, but of them all only Bernadotte, the son of a Gascon lawyer, was to gain his heart's desire.

The static military situation in the Peninsula was soon changed when Wellesley landed at Lisbon on 22 April and took over the command from Cradock. A month before, Wellesley had been asked by Lord Castlereagh for his opinion on the feasibility of defending Portugal. Wellesley replied in part: "I have always been of opinion that Portugal might be defended, whatever might be the result of the contest in Spain, and that in the meantime measures adopted for the defence of Portugal would be highly useful to the Spaniards in their contest with the French. My notion was that the Portuguese military establishment ought to be revived, and that in addition to those troops His Majesty ought to employ about 4000 cavalry. My opinion was that, even if Spain should have been conquered, the French would not be able to overrun Portugal with a smaller force than 100,000 men. As long as the contest may continue in Spain, this force [the 20,000 British troops], if it could be placed in a state of activity, would be highly useful to the Spaniards, and might eventually decide the contest."[7] With very considerable courage the British Ministers decided to follow this advice.

When Wellesley assumed command, Soult was still inactive at Oporto; Ney was deeply involved with the insurgents in Galicia; and Marshal Victor at Merida in the south was being observed by the Spanish general Cuesta. Each of these French forces was too weak to threaten the combined British and Portuguese armies, and it was therefore Wellesley's plan to defeat them in detail. While from a military point of view a move against Victor in the south would have been preferable, since this would have nullified the French threat to Seville and Lisbon, Wellesley had to take into consideration the fact that Oporto was the centre of the most fertile province in Portugal. Thus, for political reasons, he decided to strike first against Soult in the north. Wellesley's plan of action was to attack Soult, beat or cripple him, and then

in co-operation with Cuesta to turn against Victor. Further than this the British commander was not at the moment prepared to look.

This pragmatic approach to great affairs is merely another example of the practical common sense of the man who was to be master of events in the Peninsula for the next six years. As we look back now on Wellesley's plan of campaign, we are more than ever struck by the sureness of his judgement and the accuracy of his forecasts. There was nothing spectacular about Wellesley. Nothing in his character or his achievements lends itself to that over-dramatization which has so frequently been of help to other great soldiers. He was a cold, unemotional, unsympathetic man, who combined great intellectual ability with a penetrating practical sense. His army never liked him—though it had the greatest confidence in him—and most of his subordinates were afraid of him; he had, however, one very considerable asset—he was usually right. His strategical insight was at least as great as his tactical ability. Above all, he clearly understood that the overriding military consideration in the Peninsula was that the more ground the French held the weaker they would be at any given point.

Wellesley began his new appointment with five days' hard desk work in Lisbon. There were commissariat arrangements to be made, reinforcements to be absorbed into the Army, agreements to be made with the Portuguese authorities, and contact to be established with Cuesta. During this period, too, he made one organizational change of some moment. He assigned riflemen to each of the British brigades so that henceforth he would have a line of skirmishers to match against the French *tirailleurs*. While all this was going on, however, the British troops under his command were already marching out to Coimbra. At his disposal Wellesley had some 25,000 British and 16,000 Portuguese soldiers, although he was still deficient in both cavalry and guns. His plan was to leave Mackenzie with a containing force at Abrantes to observe Victor while he himself with his main body, some 18,000 strong, would march rapidly to Oporto. A flanking column of 5800 under Beresford was also sent out to cross the Douro River and march by Tras-os-Montes to cut off Soult's line of retreat.

The Oporto Campaign

Accordingly Wellesley's main body was collected at Coimbra by 4 May and two days later Beresford set out on the road to Lamego. On his mission of cutting off the French retreat to the east Beresford was authorized to go as far as Villa Real if he could find a sufficiently strong defensive position in

that locality. On 7 May, Wellesley left Coimbra, but on the following day he rested the army in order to allow Beresford time for his turning movement.

As the British main body advanced straight on Oporto they skirmished indecisively on 10 and 11 May at Albergaria Nova and Feira, and on 11 May the French retreated over the Douro River into Oporto, destroying the only bridge behind them. Since the river here is deep and wide, Soult believed himself to be secure behind it, and so although he had already decided to retreat by way of Amarante, he was in no hurry to do this. Ordering Loison to hold the bridge at Amarante, Soult began to send off his sick and his stores from Oporto but resolved not to move his main body until 12 May.

On the night of 11-12 May Wellesley arrived at the banks of the Douro River opposite Oporto. From a vantage point in a large convent which was situated on a hill on the south bank of the river, the British commander was able to obtain an excellent view of Oporto and the ground which he intended to occupy. Since the French believed that they had immobilized the British Army by the destruction of the bridge and by destroying or impounding all the boats on the river, their defensive preparations had, as a consequence, been somewhat carelessly made. Wellesley noted that on the French bank there was a large unfinished seminary whose walls came down practically to the water's edge. Owing to Soult's culpable negligence, this building was empty and undefended. Meanwhile a Portuguese barber had made his way into the British lines with information of some value. He knew the whereabouts of four large barges which the French had left unguarded. These were promptly seized and brought across to the south bank. When this was reported to Wellesley, his only comment was: "Well, let the men cross." This terse decision was remarkable alike for the audacity which inspired it and for the tactical sense which made it feasible. His excellent eye for ground and his appreciation of fire-power had enabled Wellesley to see a chance of breaking into Oporto.

He moved a number of guns and riflemen into the convent whence they could provide covering fire across the river, then began to ferry his troops across on the four barges. The first landing party, consisting only of one officer and 25 men, got ashore unnoticed and closed the great iron gates of the seminary. The men from the second barge began to take up their positions behind the breast-high garden wall, and, incredible as it may seem, the four barges made two complete trips across the river before they were noticed. As the barges were crossing for the third time with further reinforcements which included General E. Paget, a desultory fire broke out, but the French had already lost their opportunity. The seminary was now

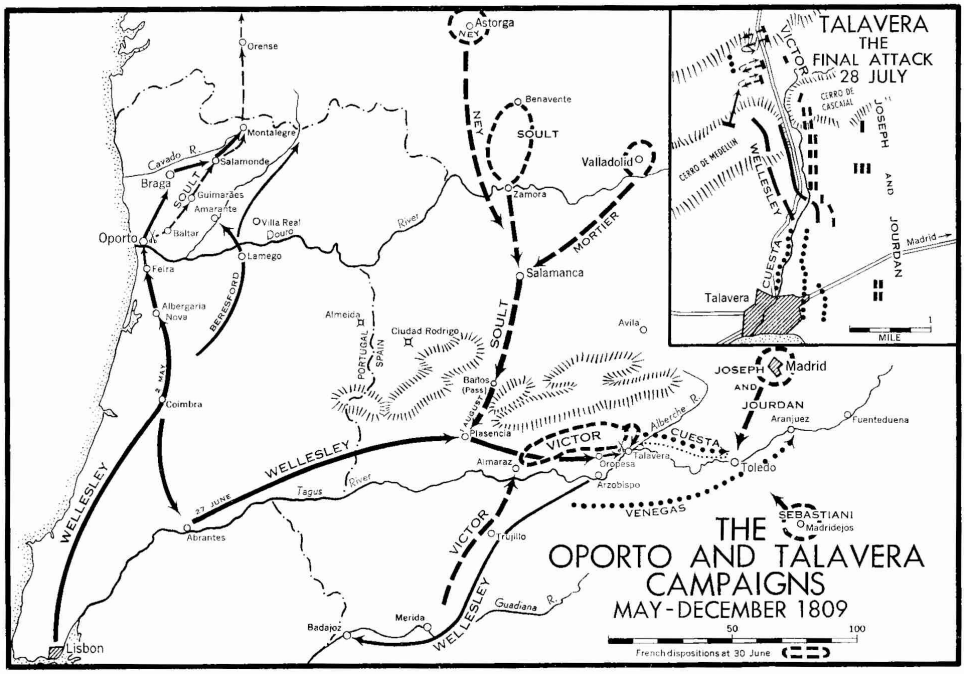
sufficiently manned to be defensible. However, even now there was no serious French attack until 11:30 in the morning, and when this was launched it was beaten off with heavy loss by gunfire from the convent and by musket-fire from behind the seminary walls. General Paget was wounded in this fracas and was replaced by General Hill. Meanwhile the barges continued to ply back and forth across the river. A second and more determined French attack was now launched by General Delaborde, but this too was repulsed with heavy loss. When the inhabitants of Oporto saw what was happening they bravely swarmed into the boats along the river bank and brought them across to the British. At this, Soult, having been surprised in broad daylight and eased out of what should have been an eminently defensible position, ordered Oporto to be evacuated and began to retreat along the road to Amarante. Since Wellesley's army was split on both sides of the river, he was in no position to pursue effectively, and although the British cavalry did some execution among the French rearguard, Soult got cleanly away.

Meanwhile, on 10 May, General Loison had attacked the Portuguese on the Douro north-west of Lamego but, having been repulsed, retired on the 12th along the road to Guimarães and Braga. He was closely pursued by Beresford and, in direct contravention of his orders, the French general made no attempt to defend the bridge at Amarante. Thus in the most casual manner Loison sacrificed Soult's chosen line of retreat and placed his commander in a desperate position. Soult was informed of Loison's action on the morning of 13 May. He was now faced with the unpalatable fact that Beresford was in a strong defensive position at Amarante, that Wellesley was close behind him with a superior force, and that all along his southern flank the Douro River formed an impassable obstacle. The situation was grave; time was running out; and he obviously had to act before Wellesley realized his difficulties. Although ill and badly shaken by a fall from his horse the previous day, Soult calmly did the only thing possible. He destroyed his guns and stores and dispersed his military chest. The French treasure chests were opened and as the infantry filed past, the men were encouraged to help themselves. Many of them did so, pocketing large handfuls of silver, but before the retreat was over, the greater part of this heavy coin was thrown away among the mountains. Then in the pouring rain on the morning of 13 May Soult led his troops by a mule track over the mountains to the north. Although on the 14th Soult joined forces with Loison at Guimarães, his difficulties were by no means over. Fearing that Wellesley might reach Braga before him, Soult now destroyed Loison's guns

and stores and again struck out over the mountains to reach the valley of the Cavado.

For the next few days Soult continued his retreat along rural byways, through Salamonde and Montalegre which was reached on 17 May. On the 19th Soult's corps was at Orense and on the 23rd it reached Lugo.

This brisk campaign cost Soult some 4700 men, about 1500 of whom had fallen victims to the peasantry between Baltar and Orense. Thus in nine days, and at the cost of about 500 British casualties, the French had been driven out of Portugal.[8] Wellesley was now free to turn south and deal with Victor. On 22 May the British Army was back at Oporto and by mid-June they had marched down to Abrantes.



The Talavera Campaign

Meanwhile, in the south, Marshal Victor at Merida was having troubles of his own. The local supplies in his vicinity were exhausted; his men were on half rations; starvation seemed an imminent possibility; and General Cuesta, having rallied his Spanish forces, appeared daily more menacing. In view of this situation, Victor applied to King Joseph for permission to retreat, and authority was finally granted to him to go back as far as Almaraz

and Plasencia. Accordingly Victor evacuated Estremadura in the middle of June and, because of the difficulty of feeding his army in the denuded countryside, fell back behind the Tagus to a position between Almaraz and Talavera. Cuesta cautiously pursued him.

While events were thus developing in the south, Marshal Ney with his 6th Corps joined Soult at Lugo. Ney had served as a colonel and Soult as a general of brigade in the *Armée de Sambre-et-Meuse* in 1795 and 1796, and the two men had hated each other even then,[9] so it is not surprising that they now quarrelled almost immediately. Their enmity spread so readily to their officers and men that it almost looked for a while as though the 6th and 2nd Corps might actually become engaged in a small civil war between themselves. Questions of temperament and previous differences aside, the two commanders had a real divergence of opinion about their future actions. Ney wished to obey the orders of the Emperor and subdue Galicia, while Soult with the truer strategical insight, doubtless sharpened by the humiliation of his recent defeat, desired first to drive the British out of the Peninsula. However, Soult at last half-heartedly agreed to concert operations with Ney against La Romana in Galicia. Accordingly, Ney marched to Santiago, but Soult, forgetting his promise to co-operate, headed south and took up a position at Benavente and Zamora. This betrayal of their agreement aroused in Ney that blind anger to which he was prone, and when he was forced to fall back to Astorga, he burned and sacked every village in his path. The end result of these operations was that Galicia was now free of the French.

Thus, by the end of June, the French in the Peninsula were deployed as follows: Ney with the 6th Corps at Astorga; Soult with the 2nd Corps at Benavente and Zamora; Mortier with the 5th Corps at Valladolid; Sebastiani with the 4th Corps at Madridejos in Castile; St. Cyr with the 7th Corps in Catalonia; Victor with the 1st Corps at Almaraz and Talavera; and Joseph and Jourdan, with the Central Reserve, at Madrid.

On 27 June, Wellesley left Abrantes and by 10 July the British Army was assembled at Plasencia. On this day Wellesley conferred with General Cuesta at Almaraz. The Spanish general was old, incapable and infirm, and he was, moreover, not unnaturally jealous of Wellesley, since he had heard that there was a plan on foot at Madrid to supersede him and make the British general Commander-in-Chief of both the British and Spanish forces. Yet in spite of these obstacles to co-operation, Wellesley managed to work out a compromise plan of campaign with Cuesta, a fact greatly to Wellesley’s credit, the more especially so since he was not by nature the

type to suffer fools gladly. In brief, the plan was that Wellesley and Cuesta with a combined force of some 56,000 would march against Victor at Talavera. As a flank guard, Sir Robert Wilson with 1500 Portuguese and about 2000 Spaniards would move on the Allied left to observe the French about Avila and to feint at Madrid. The subsidiary movement planned for the other Allied flank was much more important. The Spanish commander, Venegas, was ordered to advance against Sebastiani, to cross the Tagus at Aranjuez or Fuenteduena, and threaten Madrid.

Since Venegas had about 23,000 men under his command and Cuesta about 36,000, the total Spanish forces available for the July campaign on the Tagus amounted to some 59,000.[10] The essence of the plan was to have Venegas engage Sebastiani, thus forcing him to remain between the attacking force and Madrid, and so preventing him from reinforcing Victor or King Joseph. If Sebastiani should abandon the capital and move to the aid of Victor or the King, Venegas was ordered to occupy Madrid, a move which, it was believed, would immediately force Joseph to turn back to the city. The reason for the failure of this plan lies almost entirely in the fact that Venegas wantonly disobeyed his orders. He made no attempt to engage or pin down Sebastiani, and when the French commander had marched off unmolested from his front, Venegas, instead of moving on Madrid, wasted five days (24-29 July) between Toledo and Aranjuez. The other main weakness of the plan which Wellesley and Cuesta had devised between them was that it did not take into account the possibility that the combined forces of Soult, Ney, and Mortier could come south, as they did, to menace the Allied lines of communication.

Returning from his conference with Cuesta on 12 July, Wellesley ordered the British Army to begin its advance in six days' time. The reason for this delay was partly that food and transport still had to be obtained and partly that Venegas had to be allowed time to mount his subsidiary but vital operation. On 20 July the British Army, 21,000 strong, reached Oropesa where on the following day they were joined by Cuesta with 33,000 Spaniards. The advance to Talavera began on 22 July.

Meanwhile, Victor with his 1st Corps of some 22,000 had taken up a defensive position on a range of low hills about half a mile behind the Alberche, his left resting on the Tagus and his right on a wooded hill. When the Allies came in front of this position on the 23rd, Wellesley, seeing at once that the French marshal had exposed himself most dangerously to an attack by superior forces, besought Cuesta to join with him in an assault. From sheer perversity Cuesta declined to attack on the 23rd, although he

reluctantly agreed to fight on the following morning. As might have been expected, the French took prompt advantage of this respite and retired during the night. Wellesley was naturally furious at having lost an opportunity of destroying Victor's corps and consequently refused to advance any further until the Spaniards provided adequate transport for his army. He supported his stand by stating, very truly, that the British were already on half rations. Cuesta, however, who now became as suddenly energetic on the 24th as he had been dilatory on the 23rd, pushed on with the Spanish Army towards Toledo. On the morning of 25 July he found to his dismay that he was now opposed not by the 1st Corps alone as he had thought, but also by Sebastiani and Joseph, a total force of some 46,000. Immediately giving up all thought of a triumphant entry into Madrid, the Spanish commander rapidly retired the way he had come.

On 26 July King Joseph's force began its advance. Orders had already been sent to Soult directing him to march at once by way of Salamanca to Plasencia, in the hope that the British might thus be caught between the two French armies and destroyed. On 27 July the British and Spaniards took up a battle position in a locality of Wellesley's choosing in front of Talavera. Mackenzie's division, which was acting as a screening force, and the light cavalry had to fight an unpleasant little engagement at Casa de Salinas before they were able to occupy their designated positions in the line, but by sunset everything seemed in readiness for the battle which was expected on the morrow.

The position which Wellesley had decided upon was extremely strong. It extended north from the town of Talavera for some three miles, and although two-thirds of it lay in low ground, about two miles north of Talavera the ground began to rise sharply up to a steep hill, the Cerro de Medellin, on which Wellesley posted his left wing. The Cerro de Medellin was vital ground to the defence, for if this height fell the rest of the position would immediately become untenable. The British held the Cerro de Medellin and about one mile of the line south of it, while the Spaniards were made responsible for the defence of Talavera and for the ground, mostly enclosed and covered with olive groves, which stretched between the town and the British right.

Owing to a misunderstanding, the two British brigades which were to hold the Cerro had encamped on the evening of 27 July about half a mile behind the crest with the intention of taking up their battle positions in the morning. The front slopes of the British left were therefore only thinly covered by two battalions of the King's German Legion. About 7 o'clock on

the evening of the 27th the heads of Victor's columns began to occupy the Cascajal Hill opposite the Cerro de Medellin, and Victor at once sent some detachments of light horse towards Talavera to feel out the Spanish positions in the south. As dusk was falling four Spanish battalions, seeing the French cavalry approach, hastily fired a disorganized volley, sent up a loud shout of "Treason!", and broke in panic and disorder to the rear. Fortunately the French were unable to take advantage of this, since they had insufficient troops on the field, but Wellesley never forgot his first experience of seeing Spanish soldiers under fire. At the end of the battle Cuesta seriously intended to decimate the four battalions which had fled, and, although Wellesley dissuaded him from this drastic punishment, the Spanish commander actually had some 30 men shot.

Without consulting King Joseph, Marshal Victor, who was thoroughly familiar with the ground, decided to launch a night attack on the Cerro de Medellin. At 9 p.m., therefore, a French division began to move down into the valley opposite the British left. When the French infantry climbed the opposite slope the two battalions of the King's German Legion were taken completely by surprise and were pushed back in disorder with fairly heavy loss. Encountering little opposition, the French moved on to reach the undefended top of the Cerro, but an immediate British counter-attack drove them back again. Each side lost some 300 men in this preliminary skirmish.

Seeing that his night attack had failed, Victor sent off a dispatch to King Joseph stating that he intended to attack again at dawn unless he received specific orders to the contrary. Neither Joseph nor Jourdan was as sanguine about the outcome of such a venture as was Victor, but both were afraid that, if the British should happen to escape without a fight, the impetuous marshal would complain to the Emperor that a brilliant victory had been lost through timidity.[11] In the morning, therefore, the action commenced with a preliminary French bombardment. Because of the French superiority in number of guns, and the remarkable accuracy with which they were laid, this fire did considerable execution. Fortunately the bombardment was short. When it was followed by a further infantry assault on the Cerro de Medellin, some very heavy fighting ensued, but in the musketry duel which developed the British line mowed down the heads of the assaulting French columns. The attackers were eventually forced to retreat, having sustained a loss of some 1300 men.

A lull in the fighting followed, and both the British and the French moved down into the valley to carry off their wounded and to fill their water canteens in a little stream which flowed between the two armies. No shots

were fired during this informal truce and for some considerable time the British and French were intermingled on the ground which had so recently been fought over. While this was going on Victor, King Joseph, Jourdan, and Sebastiani held a council of war in full view of the British lines. Only Victor wanted to continue the action, but he presented his case so vehemently that he was allowed to have his way. He actually said that if he could not succeed in another attempt, he would “chuck soldiering”. The following year when he was encamped in front of Cadiz he was much plagued by Jourdan who kept writing to remind him of this rash promise.

Accordingly at 2 o’clock in the afternoon, the third and final French attack was launched against the British right and centre. It had been decided that a subsequent assault against the Cerro de Medellin would only be pushed forward if the attacks in the other sectors met with some measure of success. The Spanish portion of the line was to be almost entirely ignored. A subsidiary assault in the extreme north around the northern end of Cerro de Medellin was also launched, but was not pushed with any great determination. Wellesley, who could overlook every enemy movement from the Cerro, had ample time to adjust his dispositions to meet the final French attempt. Consequently, although there was very heavy and bloody fighting, the French made no progress against any part of the British line and the assault on the Cerro de Medellin was never launched. When, late in the afternoon, the shattered French regiments reformed on their own position Victor, raging with fury, wanted to try a fourth time, but he was at last overruled, and King Joseph gave the order for a retirement to a defensive position behind the Alberche. The French retreat began at sunset. Victor stubbornly held on to the height opposite the Cerro until 3 o’clock in the morning, at which time he too sullenly retired. Thus ended one of the most sanguinary battles of the Peninsular War, in which the British lost 5365 men, the Spanish 1200, and the French 7268.[12]

After the battle the British Army was far too exhausted to pursue or indeed even to move from its position. To make matters worse Wellesley’s men were now on one-third rations. On the morning of the 29th the British losses were somewhat compensated for when Craufurd arrived on the scene with three regiments of the Light Brigade. All throughout the previous day Craufurd had pushed his men on toward the sound of the guns. In spite of the oppressive July heat, the soldiers, each of whom had carried over fifty pounds on his back, had covered 43 miles in 22 hours.

Wellesley intended to gather supplies and recuperate his strength at Talavera as a preliminary to continuing the march on Madrid, but on 30 July

he received word of ominous movements on his left flank. He had long been apprehensive of a possible French attack through the Pass of Baños, but had not been able to persuade Cuesta to take adequate defensive measures in time.[13] Although Wellesley now learned that Soult was moving down from Salamanca, he still had no definite information concerning the size of this force and mistakenly believed it to be no more than 15,000 strong. On 2 August, Wellesley and Cuesta held a somewhat acrimonious conference where it was decided that Wellesley would move out to attack Soult. Accordingly, on the morning of 2 August, Wellesley began to advance against Soult's force. In view of the fact that Soult now actually had under his command three corps totalling some 50,000 men, it was extremely fortunate that on the very next day Cuesta learned the truth of Soult's strength. He promptly informed the British commander of the situation and very properly resolved upon an immediate retreat across the Tagus. A rapid retirement was now the only course open to Wellesley too, and by nightfall of 4 August the British Army was in relative safety on the far side of the Tagus at Arzobispo. Unfortunately, about 1500 British wounded had to be abandoned at Talavera, and so fell into the hands of the French, who treated them with the utmost kindness and consideration. The bridge at Almaraz was destroyed and a formidable Spanish force delayed Soult at Arzobispo until both Wellesley and Cuesta had time to make good their escape. Much to Soult's disgust, his pursuit of the British was called off four days later. King Joseph, who always had an eye on the safety of Madrid, forbade Soult to invade Portugal, withdrew the two extra corps which had been under his command, and himself moved back to the capital. Thus to all intents and purposes the year's campaigning drew to a close.[14]

For the next two weeks Wellesley remained south of Almaraz with the British Army. These were desperate days, for the British were encamped in the midst of a starving countryside which Victor had stripped bare two months before. Wellesley's attempts to obtain provisions were all in vain and finally on 20 August, with his army literally disintegrating from starvation, he reluctantly retreated towards Trujillo and Badajoz. The headquarters of the British Army remained at Badajoz between 3 September and 27 December and the British Army engaged in no operations during that time. At year's end, however, Wellesley could look back on the incidents of the summer with some satisfaction. He had been created Viscount Wellington after Talavera, but, much more important, Portugal was still in British hands; the Spaniards were still completely unreconciled to the French invasion; a French army had been soundly beaten in a pitched battle;

and the British commander had already laid shrewd plans for the coming year.

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[1] Oman, II, 34. In the early part of 1809, for instance, the Supreme *junta* had 135,000 men under arms in various parts of Spain, as against less than 16,000 British.

[2] Oman, III, 344. Even when an all-out effort was made, Masséna in his campaign of 1810 was able to muster only 65,000 troops for the invasion of Portugal out of some 250,000 French soldiers in Spain.

[3] Fantin des Odoards, *Journal*, 28 April 1809, 226. Quoted in Oman, II, 251.

[4] Oman, II, 139-40.

[5] *Ibid.*, 167.

[6] *Ibid.*, III, 61.

[7] *Dispatches*, IV, 261.

[8] Oman, II, 361, 364.

[9] Colonel Ramsay Weston Phipps, *The Armies of the First French Republic* (Oxford, 1926), I, 2.

[10] Oman, II, 468.

[11] *Mémoires militaires du Maréchal Jourdan*, ed. by M. le Vicomte de Grouchy (Paris), 259. “Il sentait que s’il adopterait l’avis du Maréchal Jourdan, le duc de Bellune ne manquerait pas d’écrire à l’empereur ‘qu’on lui avait fait perdre l’occasion d’une brillante victoire sur les Anglais’.”

[12] Oman, II, 555, 556.

[13] *Dispatches*, IV, 559, 560.

[14] The foregoing account of the Talavera campaign has been drawn from the following principal sources: *Dispatches*, IV, 526-540; Fortescue, VII, 213-261; Oman, II, 433-599; Napier, II, 331-416 and 444-464.

Chapter V

The Campaign of 1810

The Period of Inactivity

Between early August 1809 when Wellington withdrew across the Tagus and 27 February, 1810, the British Army in the Peninsula took no active part in the war against the French. In spite of frequent invitations from the Supreme *junta*, Wellington was adamant in his refusal to participate in joint operations with the Spaniards or to move before he was ready.

After the frustrations and disappointments of the campaign in the summer of 1809 Wellington would not again expose the British Army to the hazards of co-operating with the Spaniards. He remembered only too well the panic of the four Spanish battalions at Talavera, the disobedience of Venegas, the failure to hold the Pass of Baños, and the perversity of Cuesta. Moreover, he had no supply train of his own and he knew from bitter experience that he was quite unable to trust Spanish commissariat personnel or Spanish promises to supply food and transport. Not unnaturally, perhaps, Wellington seems often to have made insufficient allowances for the actual poverty of Spain, especially in those districts which had suffered from French depredations, and he was inclined to attribute to bad faith or to carelessness difficulties which were in fact caused by real inability to meet his army's requirements.

As was only to be expected, this suspension, for a period of more than six months, of all active British operations put some strain upon diplomatic relations with Spain, but Wellington, knowing himself to be right, was quite uncompromising on the issue. We find him writing to his brother, who had become Britain's Minister to Spain: ". . . till the evils of which I think I have reason to complain are remedied: till I see magazines established for the supply of the troops, and a regular system adopted for keeping them filled; till I see an Army upon whose exertions I can depend, commanded by officers capable and willing to carry into execution the operations which have been planned by mutual agreement, I cannot enter into any system of co-operation with the Spanish Army."[1]

Although Wellington had already shown himself to possess a remarkably true insight into the military situation in the peninsula, it was by no means certain that he would be allowed to put his ideas to the test. After the initial

setback of the drawn battle of Aspern-Essling, Napoleon's war with Austria had ended triumphantly for the French Emperor at Wagram, and peace had been signed on 12 July 1809. Thus Napoleon was now able considerably to increase the strength of his armies in the Peninsula. Between December 1809 and September 1810 about 138,000 French reinforcements entered Spain.[2] For quite some time the Emperor had intended to go to Spain himself in the spring of 1810 in order to subdue that country for good, and it was a domestic matter rather than any military consideration which ultimately dissuaded him from this resolve. When he finally made up his mind to divorce Josephine and marry an Austrian princess, he had perforce to abandon the idea of leaving France. However, he did not appoint a commander-in-chief, probably because he was suspicious of the ambitions of his marshals and also because he could never quite rid himself of the belief that he could control everything himself from Paris. More perhaps than any other factor which lay in French control, this omission to entrust the direction of the Spanish war to a single commander in the theatre was ultimately responsible for the French failure in the Peninsula.

On 17 April, 1810, Napoleon did indeed decree that three army corps and some additional troops, including a battering train of 50 heavy guns and 2500 gunners and sappers for the reduction of Ciudad Rodrigo, should be formed into the Army of Portugal and placed under the command of Marshal Masséna, the ex-smuggler who had defeated Suvorov in Switzerland in 1799 and held Genoa for the Republic in 1800. Yet, although Masséna was given this considerable force, he was still only one of a number of independent generals in the Peninsula. He reported directly to the Emperor and received his instructions from Paris. This attempt to fight the war in Spain by remote control meant, as we shall see, that Napoleon, never aware of the current situation in the Peninsula, always based his orders on information which was out of date and that the Imperial directives, when they arrived at all, seldom bore any relation to the actual problems of the campaign. Moreover, Masséna had not wanted to come to the Peninsula. He was older now and tired; his tall figure was already beginning to stoop; and his former penetrating gaze had grown dim since the afternoon when a stray pellet from the Emperor's fowling-piece had cost him an eye. Yet Wellington knew that he now had an opponent with whom it would be unsafe to trifle, and that spring he once rebuked some playful junior officers with the words: "Gentlemen, we are in the presence of one of the first soldiers of Europe."

Since the organizational errors of the Emperor could not, of course, have been foreseen by Wellington, the possibility of a concerted French move in

force against Portugal had to be considered as a very likely eventuality. The British were not strong enough to defend both Seville and Lisbon, but Wellington was firm in his opinion that Portugal at least could be held against any French army of less than 100,000 men. In Britain, however, men who possessed none of Wellington's strategical insight were by no means so certain. In December 1809, when Portland's Cabinet was replaced by Spencer Perceval's, Wellington had some difficulty in persuading the government that it would be profitable to continue the war. The Whig opposition, irresponsible almost to the point of treason, were clamorous in their demands for the withdrawal of British troops from the continent. To support their arguments, they freely invoked the ghost of Sir John Moore, until Wellington was induced to remark that "the great disadvantage under which I labour is that Sir John Moore, who was here before me, gave his opinion that Portugal could not be defended by the Army under his command".[3] The majority of Wellington's senior officers also seem to have believed that it would be only a matter of time before the British were again driven out of the Peninsula. Although in the years to come Wellington was frequently to display firmness of character, we have no better example of his resolution than during these difficult days when he stood almost alone in his opinion that the war in the Peninsula should be continued.

Wellington's Measures for the Defence of Portugal

To understand Wellington's defensive problem some description of the Portuguese borderland is necessary. Throughout its length the frontier between Spain and Portugal is rugged and desolate. In Oman's striking phrase, Spain and Portugal "turn their backs upon each other".[4] The three great rivers of Portugal, the Douro, the Tagus, and the Guadiana, all of which rise in Spain, are not highways of commerce or communication but swift streams which often run between precipices. The deep-cut valleys of these rivers do not afford easy access into Portugal, and the roads as a rule avoid rather than follow the river banks. In the early part of the nineteenth century there were only two main routes from Spain into Portugal, one in the north leading by Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, and the other in the south passing through Badajoz and Elvas. Each of these four towns guarding the gates of entry was fortified, but since the southern forts were much stronger than the northern ones, Napoleon decided that any invasion of Portugal should be from the north. Furthermore, any invader making his way into Portugal south of the Tagus must arrive before Lisbon with that river still to cross. For 30 miles east of the capital, moreover, the estuary of the Tagus is

so broad as to be quite impassable for an army, while even above this point the stream is a serious obstacle.

To defend Portugal, therefore, Wellington took three measures. In the first place it was necessary to reorganize the Portuguese Army so that the small British force could be augmented by reliable local troops. Secondly, Wellington caused a series of fortified lines to be constructed with a view to making Lisbon all but impregnable. Finally, because of the difficulty which all armies had in supplying themselves in the Peninsula, Wellington arranged that, when he fell back before the French, the countryside into which the invaders marched would be thoroughly devastated and stripped of all means of subsistence.

A British officer, Major-General Beresford, was given the Portuguese rank of marshal, placed in command of the Portuguese army, and instructed to reorganize it into an effective fighting force. He had no easy task. While the ranks of this Army could be filled satisfactorily by conscription, to find sufficient suitable officers was much more difficult. The old Portuguese regular officers, who had been drawn exclusively from the aristocratic class, were on the whole incompetent, indolent, and venal. The younger, middle-class officers, who had joined from motives of patriotism, were much better, yet the benefit which might have accrued from their enlistment was to a considerable extent offset by the fact that, when they were promoted to positions of authority, their class-consciousness was so strong that they could not be counted upon to discipline their social superiors. British officers integrated into the Portuguese Army were therefore an obvious necessity, but this unpalatable solution so outraged national pride that Beresford found it expedient to institute a system whereby Portuguese brigades were either given to a Portuguese commander with a British second-in-command or *vice versa*. In spite of the difficulties which Beresford had to overcome, his endeavours met with a very considerable measure of success. The Portuguese troops proved to be an invaluable asset and throughout the remainder of the war they performed the roles allotted to them in a creditable manner.

Wellington's second defensive preparation, dealing as it did with more tractable inanimate material, was somewhat easier to complete. As early as October 1809, he had decided upon the general outline of the engineering works which he would undertake to provide his Army with a firm base. As a precautionary measure, he strengthened the fortress of Abrantes, and built a line of redoubts behind the Alva River on the main Celorico-Coimbra road. Another line of redoubts was built at the junction of the Zezere and the

Tagus from Tancos to Martinchel in order to block the approach from Castelo Branco. Some of the mountain roads leading into the heart of Portugal were destroyed, while the communicating roads inside the area to be defended were rebuilt.

These, however, were merely incidental works compared to the main scheme of fortifications. An interlocking system of defensive positions, which came to be known as the Lines of Torres Vedras, was designed to cover the country between the Atlantic and a point on the estuary of the Tagus some 20 miles north of the capital. These lines consisted essentially of three concentric fortified zones. The outermost or northern line extended for 29 miles from the mouth of the Sizandro River to the Tagus at Alhandra; the southerly and strongest line ran for 22 miles from sea to sea; and a small interior line with a two mile circumference guarded the area between St. Julian's and Oeiras where, if the worst came to the worst, the British Army could embark safely.

Work on these fortifications progressed urgently throughout all the spring and summer of 1810. The defences themselves consisted principally of a system of detached redoubts, which were closed earthworks designed to hold three to six guns and 200 to 300 men. These redoubts were very strong, being protected by ditches 12 feet x 16 feet, parapets which were 8 feet to 14 feet thick, and artificial obstacles to their front. The redoubts were mutually supporting and provided covering fire to their flanks. Moreover, all possible cover in front of the Lines was removed and the countryside was turned into a huge glacis on which any attacking troops would be completely exposed to the fire of the defenders. To achieve this, mounds were levelled, sunken roads were filled, vineyards were cut down, and buildings were demolished. This destruction was made the more acceptable to the Portuguese by the fact that the owners were compensated on a generous scale. In addition, an artificial marsh, six miles long, was created in one sector of the defended zone, by flooding the Sizandro River.

The Lines of Torres Vedras were never attacked—which was just as well for the French. They were planned by a man who thoroughly understood all the principles of defence and—allowing for incidental differences arising from changes in weapons—they could serve even today as a model for a defensive position. The Lines provided defence in depth; they made skilful use of both natural and artificial obstacles; they provided all-round defence; their defended localities were mutually supporting; they were well stocked with supplies of all kinds; they covered vital ground; and, as we shall see, provision was made in them for ready intercommunication and, above all,

for counter-attack. When they were completed, a turning point was reached in the Peninsular War, for from then on, for all practical purposes, the French hope of driving the British from the continent became vain.

The third defensive measure adopted by Wellington, the devastation of the countryside, was not new to this part of the world. It was indeed an old Portuguese custom to denude the territory across which invaders from Spain must march. Thus, when the time came to put this policy into effect, the peasants obeyed willingly, although a certain amount of foodstuff was hidden rather than burned. The townsfolk, being richer, were perhaps less willing to carry out the directive, but on the whole they evacuated their villages and towns readily enough. All bridges, mills, and ovens were destroyed; all livestock was driven away; all transport was removed; all ferry boats were burned; and all foodstuff which could not be removed to the defended areas was ordered to be destroyed. Thus when the French advanced, they moved in the midst of an artificial desert. Wellington, for once miscalculating slightly, believed that this policy would force the French to retreat in a few weeks. Actually, as we shall see, in spite of the most severe hardships, they hung on for three months, but one-third of the French Army became casualties in so doing.

The Opening Moves of the Campaign of 1810

During the winter of 1809-1810 the French were much troubled by Spanish guerrillas along the courses of the upper Ebro and the upper Douro. Native leaders like Mina and Sanchez had at last adopted the true tactics for dealing with the invader, and instead of offering battle they harried French communications, cut off and killed isolated detachments, and slipped away again before a sufficient French force could be assembled to deal with them. After a gallant defence, Astorga fell to Junot on 22 April, but the French were no nearer than before to controlling Spain. Despite repeated reinforcements, they still did not have enough troops to hold down the Spanish population. Thus when Masséna marched into Portugal, he could do so with only 65,000 men instead of the 100,000 which Wellington had feared. Moreover, Masséna had no troops available for launching a subsidiary and potentially dangerous attack south of the Tagus.

Between March and July of 1810, therefore, Craufurd's Light Division,[5] together with one regiment of German hussars, guarded the 40-mile front between Almeida and the Agueda with unqualified success. Craufurd organized an efficient intelligence service which kept him well informed of any French moves on his front. This task of static advanced guard could

probably not have been so well performed by any other formation except Craufurd's division, but this remarkable body of men was by now so well trained that seven minutes sufficed to get the division under arms in the middle of the night and fifteen minutes was enough to bring it complete into order of battle, with its baggage loaded and assembled in the rear.

As a preliminary move in the campaign, the French began partially to blockade Ciudad Rodrigo on 26 April, but the blockade was not seriously attempted until Ney arrived with 20,000 troops on 30 May. Wellington quite properly felt that he was not strong enough to come to the assistance of Ciudad Rodrigo's commander, Herrasti, but the defence was so gallantly conducted that the fortress did not surrender until 10 July, when one-quarter of the defenders had become casualties, the walls had been breached beyond hope of repair, and the supply of food was almost exhausted. French casualties during the siege were in the neighbourhood of 1200.[6]

On 21 July Ney began his advance from Ciudad Rodrigo with the 6th Corps, and Craufurd retired before him to Junca near Almeida. Continued success had perhaps made Craufurd overbold, for three days later, the Light Division was almost caught on the far side of the Coa River when Ney attacked with 24,000 men. The British only got back across the bridge in some disorder and with the loss of 300 men. In this engagement which but for the steadiness of the troops might have ended disastrously, General Picton refused to come to Craufurd's aid, although this aid was specifically requested and although Picton had been ordered by Wellington to support the Light Division. After the British were safely across the bridge, Marshal Ney, with his habitual fury in combat which at times amounted almost to madness, launched three futile attacks. These were easily beaten back, and so the French loss for the day amounted to 527 men,[7] almost all of whom fell in the successive attempts to storm the bridge.

Masséna now commenced the investment of Almeida. Here Wellington had counted on as stiff and prolonged a defence as at Ciudad Rodrigo, for Almeida was much the stronger of the two fortresses. However, on the early evening of 26 August the door of the main powder magazine in Almeida had been opened so that ammunition might be sent to the guns on the southern rampart. A leaking powder barrel had been brought out and had left a train of powder between the courtyard and the interior of the magazine. When a French bomb fell in the courtyard, the powder train was ignited and this led to the explosion of another barrel of powder inside the magazine. This in turn set off the whole store of ammunition, killing 500 of the garrison and destroying well over half the town, together with almost all the artillery

ammunition. The Almeida garrison had no alternative but to surrender on the following day, and accordingly on the night of 28 August Wellington withdrew his army to a position between Guarda and Celorico.

The shortages of transport and supplies which were already making themselves felt in the French camp prevented Masséna from moving forward after the capture of Almeida until 15 September. On this day the French commander began to advance along the north bank of the Mondego River by way of Busaco. When Wellington learned the direction of his opponent's march he was jubilant. "There are certainly many bad roads in Portugal", he wrote to Charles Stuart on 18 September, "but the enemy has taken decidedly the worst in the whole kingdom."[8] On 20 September, Masséna's park, containing his reserve artillery and provisions, was ambushed in a defile by Colonel Trant and his Portuguese. Much damage was inflicted, but this attack was not as decisive as it might have been since an infantry battalion arrived on the scene and managed to drive off the Portuguese in time. Yet by 22 September, largely because of Wellington's scorched earth policy, Masséna's provisions were already running low. Of the thirteen days' provisions which he carried, only enough for six days was left. This decided Masséna to push on to Coimbra by the most direct route, that by Busaco, in spite of the fact that there was at Busaco an eminently defensible position.

The Battle of Busaco

The British commander, learning the direction of Masséna's march, at once decided to offer battle at Busaco ridge. This ridge, which rises to a height of over 1500 feet, extends north-west for some nine miles from the Mondego River. To an observer on the height all the countryside about is spread out in a vast panorama, making the movement of any considerable body of troops noticeable at a great distance. On the left centre of the position chosen by Wellington, hard by the old stone convent of Busaco, the highroad from Celorico to Coimbra climbs the ridge and crosses the watershed, while further to the right, but still in the central part of the position, a secondary road from Sardeira to Palheiros also crosses the escarpment.

Wellington rested his right on the Mondego River where the Busaco ridge drops precipitously to the stream, and he extended his left almost to the village of Paradas in the north. Although for this long position Wellington was able to deploy only 52,000 men, two considerations made this an adequate defensive force. The first was the commanding nature of the

ground. Wellington was able to see the detail of every French movement half an hour before it could threaten his position. Secondly, the extended nature of the position was, to a large degree, counteracted by the fact that for most of its length the ridge afforded easy lateral communication for reinforcing movements. Since the central part of Busaco ridge was flat-topped, infantry could move rapidly across it, while on the right wing, although the top of the ridge here was rough and broken, there was a cart track a few hundred yards down the reverse slope by which reinforcements could easily move to any threatened point. These movements could be made, moreover, completely out of sight of the enemy. Accordingly, Wellington placed most of his reserve on his left wing where lateral communications were more difficult.

There was some slight skirmishing along the British line of outposts on the 26th, but this irregular bickering fire died away at sunset. Marshal Ney had wished to attack that morning, but Masséna was ten miles to the rear at Mortagoa whiling away the hours with a pretty lady who accompanied him in the guise of a captain of dragoons. Ney's aide-de-camp shouted unavailingly to Masséna through the bedroom door but could get no satisfactory response. That night the British troops slept in battle order on their position with their muskets beside them. All the top of the ridge was in darkness, but down in the valley below them the British soldiers could see hundreds of French bivouac fires glowing in the blackness.

Masséna, after conducting a leisurely reconnaissance on the 26th, decided to launch his attack on the 27th. His plan was to use both of the roads across the ridge, and so Marshal Ney was ordered to advance along the highroad leading to the convent, while Reynier was to launch his assault along the secondary road further to the right. Reynier's attack was to begin first and Ney was to move only when he saw that his colleague's troops had gained the crest of the ridge. Junot in reserve was to reinforce either Ney or Reynier as required.

Shortly after dawn on the 27th, Reynier began his attack, moving along the secondary road in close column, covered by skirmishers. An early morning ground mist was of some help to the assaulting troops as it partially concealed the beginnings of their movement. Nevertheless the British were ready for them, the more so since the previous night Wellington, on the advice of his Q.M.G., Murray, had reinforced the very points attacked.[9] Reynier's force actually reached the crest of the ridge and was seen there by Marshal Ney, but the French were immediately thrown back by a vigorous counter-attack. Reynier then ordered General Foy to launch a second assault

aimed at the crest west of the hamlet of San Antonio. However, General Leith, who was commanding in this sector, brought up reinforcements by the hidden road and Foy's assault too was beaten back with heavy loss.

Ney, in the meantime, had begun his attack along the highroad. The steepness of Busaco ridge throughout its length made the employment of cavalry impracticable, while the only French guns which were able to take any part in the action were two batteries which Ney took along the road to the foot of the ridge. After considerable difficulty and not a few casualties from British fire, the attacking French troops finally approached the crest. They had been climbing steadily for nearly twenty minutes, but just as they seemed about to reach their objective, General Craufurd waved up his battalions which had been lying concealed behind the hilltop. The British infantry quickly manned the crest and then, at a distance of not more than ten paces, poured in a deadly volley. The French column was literally blown away. Now, too, the British battalions on both flanks of the attack executed a sharp wheel and caught the French in a deadly semi-circle of fire. Ney's troops broke and fled downhill in the utmost disorder, leaving many dead and wounded behind them.

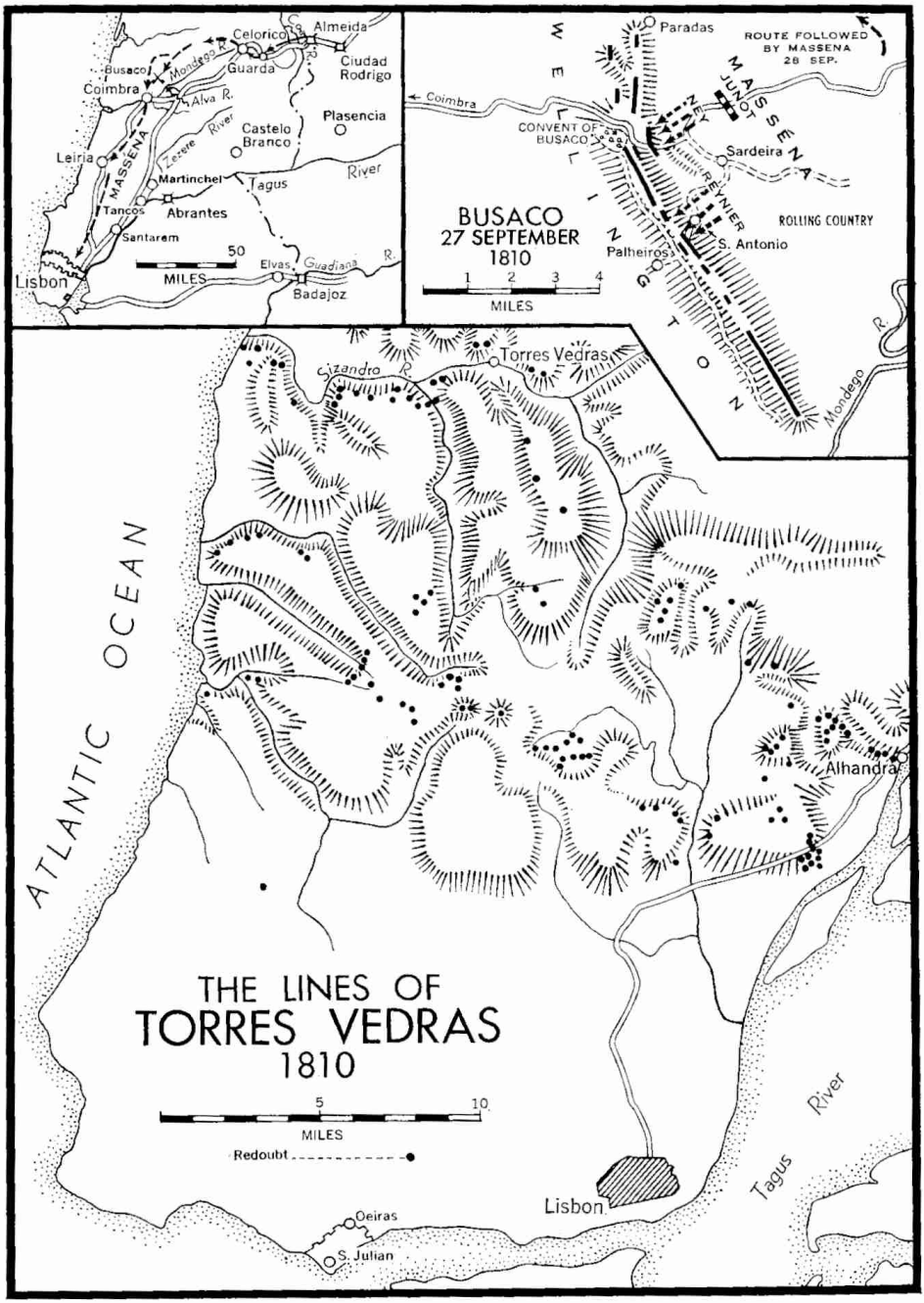
This was the end of the battle, for Masséna very sensibly refused to launch any further assaults that day. The French Army retired to its camp where its commander took counsel with his generals as to what he should do next. The total Allied loss at the battle of Busaco was 1252, strangely enough split exactly equally between the British and the Portuguese, each of whom lost 626 men. French casualties, on the other hand, numbered 4498.[10]

Masséna was too good a general to believe that another attack on Wellington's position would be any more successful than the first, yet he was too determined a commander to consider retiring tamely on Almeida and abandoning the campaign. A move against Oporto was considered, but Masséna decided against this because he judged, quite rightly, that such a move would neither assist materially in the reconquest of Portugal nor achieve the other main object of his campaign, the destruction of the British Army. Late on the afternoon of the 28th, however, French reconnaissance units discovered a flanking road leading north-westward from the rear of their position and along this road Masséna moved his army on the following day. From the hilltop Wellington watched it go during the course of the afternoon, and then at dusk the British commander rode leisurely back to the convent to dictate the orders which at once set his army in motion towards Coimbra and the Lines of Torres Vedras.

The 40,000 inhabitants of Coimbra reluctantly abandoned their town in the wake of the retreating British, most of them making their way on foot to Lisbon. Fortunately for these refugees the weather held good. On 1 October Masséna's troops entered Coimbra which they promptly looted, wasting considerable quantities of invaluable food in the process. After three days in Coimbra, Masséna, leaving only an inadequate guard behind in the town, continued his advance, while the British retreated by easy marches to the Lines of Torres Vedras. In this retreat, as in Moore's, there was some looting and drunkenness in the British Army, but Wellington suppressed it with an iron hand. He had three men hanged at Leiria, and some regiments whose conduct had not been above reproach were forced to bivouac each night in the fields and were forbidden to enter any village. On 7 October Trant's Portuguese militia swooped down on Coimbra, easily defeated the tiny French garrison there, and took 4500 sick and wounded French soldiers prisoners.

The Lines of Torres Vedras

When he was safety back within the Lines of Torres Vedras, Wellington formed a new 6th Division out of reinforcements which had arrived, but he was careful, as was his custom, to mix the new arrivals with veteran regiments. When this was done Wellington had approximately 35,000 British troops under arms, some 24,500 Portuguese regulars, and about 12,400 Portuguese militia. In addition, the defending force was augmented by two Spanish divisions, totalling about 8000 men, which La Romana very generously marched into Lisbon on Wellington's request. The outer redoubts of the Lines of Torres Vedras needed 18,000 troops for their defence and the inner redoubts 14,000, but of course it was not necessary to man both of these lines at the same time. It was no part of the British commander's plan to garrison the Lines with troops of the field army. This was kept as an operational reserve in the rear while the manning of the defensive works was entrusted to the Portuguese militia, the two Spanish divisions, and 2000 British marines, augmented by some regular artillerymen.



Wellington had made his arrangements for the reception of the French with his customary thoroughness, and long before Masséna's Army appeared

on his front he had reason to be satisfied with the result. The engineering works which have been described provided Wellington with what was virtually an impregnable position, while the task of defence was greatly facilitated by the excellent roads within the defended area. A semaphore signalling system manned by British seamen was introduced and brought to such a high peak of efficiency that a message could be relayed from one end of the Lines to the other, a distance of 29 miles, in just seven minutes. In addition, the British naval flotilla in the estuary of the Tagus considerably augmented the potential fire-power of the defenders and greatly increased the difficulties which the French would encounter in any attempt to move south of the river.

When Masséna had his first glimpse of the Lines of Torres Vedras on the morning of 11 October, he was badly shaken by what he saw. He had had no advance information about the immensely strong fortifications which he now found confronting him and he had been told by the Portuguese traitors on his staff that he would find nothing before him but an undulating plateau. When those who had misinformed him tried to excuse themselves by pointing out that the British had made the obstructions in front of the French Army, Masséna angrily pointed ahead of him: “They didn’t make those mountains!” he retorted bitterly.[11]

For the next few days the French were employed in skirmishing with the British outposts to discover the extent and strength of the fortifications. Masséna, of course, realized that it would be folly to attack, but instead of retiring promptly, as Wellington had anticipated, the French commander encamped his army in front of the Lines for a month. During this period the November rains set in. Food became daily scarcer, and the French foraging parties had continually to extend the area of their operations, accepting the additional casualties from guerrilla activity which this involved. In spite of their best efforts, all the French went hungry and many actually died from starvation. Sickness and disease also took their toll, and deserters began to make their way into the British lines by the hundreds.

At last, when human endurance could stand no more, Masséna on 14 November began his retreat to Santarem. The French, assisted by a dense fog and handled in a masterly way by their commander, broke contact cleanly and escaped unobserved. Wellington pursued very cautiously until contact was again re-established about Santarem. Here Masséna stayed until March, during which time the French lost over 10,000 men to starvation, sickness and the rigours of the Portuguese winter. The British, who were prepared for this type of campaign, suffered much less severely. On 24

November, indeed, Wellington had moved the bulk of his army back into winter quarters, leaving only the Light Division, Spencer's division, and Pack's Portuguese brigade to watch the French. On 5 March, Masséna began his retreat to Coimbra, and as the peasants with their knives closed in on the stragglers the French sacked and burned as they withdrew. Savagery begot savagery, and an eyewitness[12] tells of seeing a Portuguese peasant hounding on his dog to attack the exhausted and the dying.

Wellington was glad to see Masséna go, for he had been a formidable and dangerous adversary.[13] Between 10 September 1810, when he had left Spain and the end of December, Masséna had not received a single dispatch from France nor had he been in contact with any of the other French commanders in the Peninsula. For all he knew, the Emperor might be engaged in a major war against Russia, Austria, and Prussia, or even have suffered defeat. During this time, too, only one of Masséna's own dispatches got through to the outside world, and to ensure this an escort of 600 men had had to be provided. With so much against him, the wonder is perhaps not so much that Masséna was forced ultimately to retreat with only two-thirds of his force intact, but rather that he had been able to endure so long. Wellington was later to say that, of all the French commanders he had met in the Peninsula, Masséna was by far the ablest.

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[1] *Dispatches*, V, 213.

[2] Oman, III, 205.

[3] *Dispatches*, VI, 6.

[4] Oman, III, 154.

[5] The Light Brigade had become the Light Division as of 1 March, 1810.

[6] Oman, III, 254.

[7] *Ibid.*, 264.

[8] *Dispatches*, VI, 454.

[9] Ward, 151 and note.

[10] Oman, III, 384-5.

[11] Sir H. Maxwell, *Life of Wellington* (London, 1899), I, 202.

[12] Napier, IV, 472.

[13] The following principal sources have been used for the foregoing account of the battle of Busaco and of the Lines of Torres Vedras, Busaco: *Dispatches*, VI, 470-476; Oman, III, 359-389; Fortescue, VII, 506-532. The Lines of Torres Vedras: *Supplementary Dispatches*, VI, 451-474; Oman, III, 419-436; Fortescue, VII, 541-543.

Chapter VI

The Campaign of 1811

Masséna's Last Attempt to Remain in Portugal

Masséna, as has been related, began his retreat from Santarem on 5 March with his army destitute and starving. Since he desired to keep open his line of retreat into Spain, he abandoned any idea of capturing Coimbra or of taking up the line of the Mondego, and retired instead upon Celorico. As the British followed him, there was a sharp brush with the French rearguard at Redinha on 13 March and again at Casal Novo on 14 March. Two days later, there was a further clash at the bridge of Foz de Arouce, but on the whole the French made good their retreat without being seriously molested.

As may be imagined, Masséna was far from satisfied with the results of the campaign. Although the fault for failure lay far more at the Emperor's door than at his own, he rightly judged that his career would be ruined unless he could do something to retrieve the fortunes of his army. Therefore, as a last desperate throw, he decided at Celorico on 22 March not to retreat by way of Ciudad Rodrigo. Instead he formed the entirely impracticable scheme of sending his army south-east to Plasencia in northern Estremadura. This meant that the French Army, tattered and decimated as it was, would be moving through a region where it would be impossible to live off the country, where the roads were bad, and where, in fact, little could be achieved except the further disintegration of the already demoralized force.

The entire army received Masséna's new orders with a bitter sense of shock. Marshal Ney, indeed, flatly refused to obey, and for this insubordination Masséna relieved him of his command and sent him back to France. Here Ney was scolded by his imperial master, but apparently Napoleon came to consider that there had been some excuse for Ney's conduct since the recalcitrant marshal was soon again given full and honourable employment in a position of responsible command.

It took Masséna only six days to realize how impossible was this last scheme of his. On 28 March, with his army everywhere immobilized and starving, he countermanded the orders for the move on Plasencia. On the following day the French began to fall back towards Ciudad Rodrigo.

Although the British conformed to this movement, they did nothing to bring on a general action. A final flareup of fighting occurred, however, when at Sabugal on 3 April the Light Division in the British van clashed with the French 2nd Corps. For a time the British formation, clumsily and ineptly handled by Sir William Erskine (Craufurd was on leave in England), was exposed to attack from a very superior French force. Fortunately the Light Division was reinforced before the situation became desperate, and the French again fell back.

During the campaign in Portugal the French loss was about 25,000, of whom only some 2000 were killed in action. The British had taken 8000 prisoners, but the remaining 15,000 French casualties had been caused by starvation and sickness.[1] When Napoleon received word of this disaster, he determined to relieve Masséna of his command and to replace him by Marshal Marmont, a young and vain general, but reasonably competent.

Meanwhile in the south where Marshal Victor was blockading Cadiz with 19,000 men, an expedition from the beleaguered city under La Peña and General Graham landed at Tarifa in February, and marching north to take the besiegers in the rear, defeated the French at Barrosa on 5 March. The battle had been fought entirely under Graham's direction, but when La Peña refused to follow up the advantage gained by the victory, Graham returned to Cadiz, and the military situation in this part of Spain remained substantially unchanged.

The First British Siege of Badajoz

Marshal Soult had by now moved to lay siege to Badajoz, and when a Spanish field army under Mendizabal had attempted the relief of this fortress, it had been disastrously defeated by Soult near the Gebora River. Unfortunately when Menacho, the Spanish governor of Badajoz, was killed, the command devolved upon Imaz, a timid, weak man, who disgracefully surrendered on 10 March, long before capitulation was necessary. Once Badajoz had been secured, Soult left sixteen battalions and five cavalry regiments under Mortier in Estremadura and immediately returned with the greater part of his army to Seville which was dangerously under-garrisoned. Mortier's first move was to invest the small Spanish garrison at Campo Mayor, which, outnumbered as it was, inevitably capitulated, although not before it had delayed Mortier for a full seven days. This gallant defence gave Beresford the time he needed to reach the scene.

On 16 March, Beresford had been directed to march with 18,000 troops to the relief of Badajoz, but the news of the surrender had arrived just before

the expedition started. Accordingly Beresford was ordered to advance against the French at Campo Mayor, but Wellington instructed him to base his army on Jerumenha, and to secure his communications by building a pontoon bridge there, before attempting to invest Badajoz.

On the morning of 26 March, in heavy rain, Beresford's force converged on Campo Mayor. At the British approach, the French commander, Latour-Maubourg, who had been left in this town with 2400 men, immediately retreated, covering his retirement with a regiment of dragoons. The British cavalry, commanded by General Long, broke the French regiment without difficulty, but then, getting completely out of hand, quite ineffectually pursued the flying French horse for a full seven miles. While this was going on, Latour-Maubourg got his little force safely into Badajoz without much loss. When the events of the day were reported to Wellington, he was understandably angry at the British cavalry for their lack of discipline.

Beresford, however, was unable to make any immediate move against Badajoz, largely because of the administrative difficulties which his force was now experiencing. It was found that the pontoons for the intended bridge across the Guadiana would have to be brought up from Lisbon; food was very scarce; and at least one of Beresford's divisions was literally without shoes. Eight precious days were lost for these reasons, and during this time Badajoz was made defensible by its garrison.

When Mortier returned to France on 26 March, Latour-Maubourg assumed control of French operations in the area. Although a good divisional commander, Latour-Maubourg was probably not competent to command a larger force, but, in spite of this, nothing went right for the British from the very beginning of the siege. As the French general began to retire towards Llerena, leaving a garrison of 3000 men in Badajoz, Beresford decided to pursue the enemy's main body rather than immediately invest the fortress. Yet even when southern Estremadura had been cleared of the French, the siege of Badajoz could not begin at once. For one thing, the Guadiana River rose unexpectedly in a single night and swept away the first British bridge. Even more serious, the British, not for the first or the last time in the Peninsula, were now to suffer from their lack of a proper siege train. Thus, since Beresford had no heavy guns of his own, he was forced to assemble what Portuguese cannon he could lay his hands on. Yet in spite of his best efforts, only 23 guns were available by the end of April, and—incredible as it may seem—some of the heavy guns used against Badajoz were more than 200 years old. On the other hand, however, the besieging

force was now joined by General Castaños with 1000 Spanish cavalry and 3000 infantry.

On 20 April, Wellington rode south to direct the siege in person, leaving Sir Brent Spencer in command in the north in his absence. Wellington stayed for only five days at Badajoz, but during that time he issued very detailed orders for the conduct of operations. The siege proper was to begin as soon as the guns were ready. Because he believed that Soult would almost certainly attempt to relieve the fortress, Wellington ordered Beresford to retire behind the Guadiana if the French should advance with too large a force. If, however, the relieving army was not too formidable and success seemed likely, Beresford was given permission to fight a general action. Wellington suggested that the best ground for this would be in the vicinity of Albuera. His further stipulation, that the Allied forces were to be under one command, was very generously met when Castaños agreed to place himself and the 15,000 troops which were eventually at his disposal under Beresford's orders. Castaños was given the task of observing Latour-Maubourg.

On 5 May, Beresford was advised by his engineers that all was at last in readiness for the siege. From the outset, however, the operation was badly mishandled. The engineers, who had recommended that the attack should be launched against one of the strongest forts on the circumference of the town, soon discovered that it was not possible to dig trenches because there was solid bedrock under some three inches of topsoil in this area. Thus the besiegers were forced to throw up earthworks with soil brought from a distance, a most unsatisfactory expedient. Moreover, several of the British guns were soon dismounted by artillery fire from Badajoz, while a French sortie succeeded in further delaying the Allied preparations. On 12 May, Beresford received news that Soult's relieving army, some 23,000 strong, was marching from Seville and was already in touch with Latour-Maubourg. Accordingly, Beresford raised the siege and retired to Albuera, having lost 733 men in the first unsuccessful attempt to take Badajoz.

Fuentes de Oñoro

Meanwhile, in the northern sector, Wellington had hoped for a time that he might starve out the garrison of Ciudad Rodrigo. Owing, however, to the negligence of Sir William Erskine, the Light Division's attempt to intercept a reinforcing convoy failed, and Ciudad Rodrigo was revictualled.[2] When Sir William tamely allowed a second convoy to get into Ciudad Rodrigo on 12 April, Wellington was forced to abandon his plan of investing this

fortress. Instead, he put the majority of his army into cantonments and settled down to starve out Almeida.

At this time the Army of Portugal was still under Masséna's command, for the dispatch replacing him had not yet been delivered. So, still hopeful of doing something to retrieve his personal fortunes, Masséna determined to attempt the relief of Almeida. For this operation, he begged help from Marshal Bessières, who eventually arrived in person with small reinforcements. Yet it is doubtful if Masséna was really grateful for his colleague's aid, since throughout the rest of the campaign Bessières followed him about like a shadow, offering unasked-for advice at every opportunity and evincing polite curiosity about his slightest move. "I could," said Masséna bitterly, "have done with more men and less Bessières."

On 26 April Masséna arrived at Ciudad Rodrigo with 48,000 men, and on 2 May the French began to cross the Agueda. Since Wellington had determined to fight rather than abandon his investment of Almeida, he took up a defensive position along the line of the Dos Casas brook between Fort Concepcion and the village of Fuentes de Oñoro. Although the original defensive position was five miles long, the British left was very strong. In the neighbourhood of Fort Concepcion the Dos Casas flowed through a ravine 150 feet deep, but upstream towards Fuentes de Oñoro the watercourse became progressively shallower until beyond that village it was nowhere an obstacle. The village itself was well suited to defence, for the houses were of solid stone and there were many breast-high garden walls which provided cover for infantry. Since his right flank was comparatively open, Wellington deployed the bulk of his reserves on that wing. On the extreme right, at a distance of some two miles to the south of Fuentes de Oñoro, the tiny hamlets of Pozo Bello and Nava de Aver were held respectively by one battalion and by a band of Portuguese guerrillas.

The British retirement to Fuentes de Oñoro was covered by the Light Division and the cavalry, who joined the main body on the early afternoon of 3 May. The French advanced guard was hard on their heels, and that same afternoon Masséna impetuously launched his first attack. At once recognizing that Fuentes de Oñoro was the key to Wellington's position, Masséna ordered an immediate frontal assault on the village and accompanied this by a demonstration against the British left. While daylight held there was heavy street fighting in the village. The French made little headway, however, and since they were the attacking force, their casualties were much heavier than the British. This attack died down with the coming of darkness.

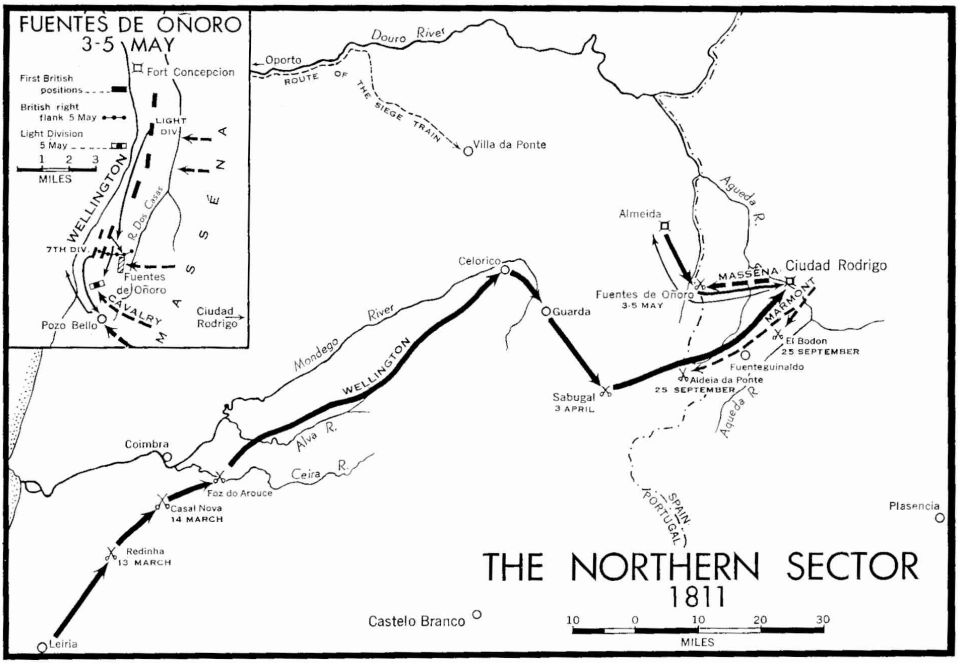
Having failed in his first attempt to force the British position by brute strength, Masséna spent all the next day in extensive reconnaissance to the British right. Apart from a certain amount of musket-fire in the village, there was no fighting on 4 May. Before dark, however, Masséna had discovered the extent of Wellington's position and had decided to initiate a wide turning movement between Pozo Bello and Nava de Aver. In addition to the main blow on the flank, it was part of Masséna's plan to pin down the troops on Wellington's front by holding attacks while the movement to the right was in progress.

On the night of 4-5 May Masséna began to move three infantry divisions and most of his 4500 cavalry far to the south of Fuentes de Oñoro. Wellington sensed what was toward, although he did not believe that the flanking attack when it came would be as strong as was actually the case. To guard himself on his exposed wing Wellington ordered most of his cavalry to his right during the night and also sent the 7th Division to the vicinity of Pozo Bello. These new dispositions proved an ineffective counter to Masséna's move, for the British cavalry were not in sufficient numbers adequately to cover the area assigned to them, while the advance of the 7th Division placed that formation in open ground two miles away from the main position.

The second French attack began at dawn on 5 May, and the British cavalry was soon forced to draw in upon Pozo Bello in the face of greatly superior numbers of French cavalry. The three French infantry divisions now threatened both to cut off the 7th Division and to take Fuentes de Oñoro on its flank. As soon as he became aware of the unexpected strength of Masséna's flank attack, Wellington sent out the Light Division to help the 7th Division back to the main position. Behind this movement Wellington formed two infantry divisions and some Portuguese troops into a new line on the right flank at right angles to his former front. Fuentes de Oñoro thus became the centre rather than the right of the British position.

Although the task which had been given the Light Division was hazardous, it was the ideal formation for such a role, the more especially so since it had once again come under its old commander, Craufurd, who had returned to Wellington's army only the night before. The 7th Division was able to make its way back to the main position with surprisingly slight loss, its retirement being covered all the way by the British cavalry and the Light Division. Craufurd's men, keeping perfect order and forming square whenever the need arose, proved themselves impervious to all the French cavalry charges and never allowed the French infantry to get close enough to

launch an attack. During this phase of the battle the British guns which supported the Light Division were continuously unlimbering and firing, and it was during this part of the action that Captain Norman Ramsay, of the R.H.A., won the admiration of the Army by cutting his way to safety with two guns through a swarm of French *chasseurs*.[3]



While this notable retirement was in progress, Masséna attacked Fuentes de Oñoro with three divisions in an attempt to break the British centre. The British position here was very strong, however, and French casualties were correspondingly high. The defenders had to be levered out from behind each garden wall and from inside each barricaded house. Yet little by little the British, who were greatly outnumbered and were also accepting heavy casualties, were pushed back up the hill to the church at the far end of the village. When Wellington saw this, he ordered a counter-attack, which succeeded in regaining most of the village, although only after very heavy fighting.

By two o'clock in the afternoon the crisis of the battle had passed. The French were now running low in ammunition; their losses had been extremely heavy; the newly-formed British position was still intact; and the outnumbered French artillery had been largely put out of action. Taking

stock of the situation, Masséna declined to launch any further attack, so that by the time twilight fell the battle had died down to some mere light skirmishing. The Allied losses for this day totalled 1452 while the French casualties amounted to 2192.[4]

During the night following the battle, Wellington put his weary troops to the task of entrenching the position, and it is perhaps a comment on the advantage which Masséna had gained by his turning movement that this was the only time during the Peninsular War when the British were forced to use field fortifications on a large scale. Afterwards, indeed, Wellington let drop the revealing remark that, "if Boney had been there, we'd have been beat".[5] By morning, the position, which had been strong before, was virtually impregnable. By daylight, Masséna took careful note of the improvements in the British defences, and as a consequence was more reluctant than ever to try conclusions again. Since he was unable to achieve the object of his campaign, the relief of Almeida, without re-opening a pitched battle whose outcome would at the best be doubtful, the French commander decided if possible to withdraw the Almeida garrison, to blow up that fortress, and retire.

That night three French soldiers volunteered to penetrate the British lines in order to reach General Brennier in Almeida. Two of these, who disguised themselves as Spanish peasants, were captured and shot, but the third, a private in uniform, succeeded in getting through to the fortress and delivered to the French governor the orders to evacuate the place. Accordingly Brennier, having blown up his artillery and mined the fortifications, broke out with his 1300 troops on the night of 10-11 May. At four o'clock on the previous afternoon Sir William Erskine had received orders to move in upon Almeida, but apparently he did not act upon them or even take the trouble to read them until several hours later. This neglect allowed Brennier to cut his way through the dispersed cordon of British troops about Almeida, and to make good his escape with a loss of only 360 men, although there were fully 6000 British soldiers who should have been within reach. Wellington angrily termed this escape "the most disgraceful military event" which had yet happened to the British in the Peninsula, a statement which, if it was an exaggeration, was, under the circumstances, perhaps a pardonable one.

The Battle of Albuera

While Fuentes de Oñoro was being fought in the north, Soult in the south was collecting some 25,000 men, including about 4400 cavalry, for the relief of Badajoz. At midnight 9-10 May he began his march from Seville.

Beresford, hearing of Soult's movement in good time, was easily able to follow Wellington's orders and concentrate at his leisure on Albuera, where he was joined by the Spanish Generals Blake and Castaños with some 14,000 Spanish soldiers. On 15 May, during the last stages of the British concentration, the Allied cavalry under General Long made no effective attempt to delay the French vanguard. As a result of this, Beresford relieved Long of his command and appointed General Lumley as commander of all the Allied cavalry.

The position at Albuera was on gently rising ground along the banks of a fordable stream. The undulating slopes rose in spots to heights of between 60 to 150 feet, but there was nowhere any steep ascent nor did the river in front of the British position anywhere present an obstacle. There was a clear field of fire, but further back, on the French side of the stream, there were numerous thick woods which provided cover for movement. In the centre of the position the large village of Albuera stood as the key to the whole. Beresford made Albuera village the centre of his line, which extended for about two miles to the right and one mile to the left.

Soult, not realizing that Blake's Spaniards had already joined Beresford and that the 25,000 French were therefore opposed by an Allied army of over 35,000 men, determined to attack on 16 May. His plan was to demonstrate against Albuera village while the real attack would be made by a wide flanking movement against the British right. When this move developed, Blake on the British right at first underestimated the strength of the enemy attack and was slow in sending reinforcements to the threatened wing. Beresford, too, seems to have been of the opinion that the main French blow would be struck against his centre. Thus the Spanish troops under Zayas on the extreme right flank bore the brunt of the first clash. Although they were heavily outnumbered, they stood firm.

When he saw this attack develop in strength, Beresford ordered Stewart's division to reinforce the Spaniards. Unfortunately, although Stewart moved impetuously against the flank of the attacking French columns and was able to take them in enfilade, he had neglected to protect his own flank by forming square. Thus a great disaster now befell Colborne's brigade on the exposed end of the division's line. Under cover of the heavy pall of smoke which hung about the battlefield, two regiments of cavalry advanced against Colborne. They pressed the charge home with no difficulty and within five minutes Colborne's three leading battalions were virtually wiped out, suffering a loss of 58 officers and 1190 other ranks. This episode illustrates in a dramatic manner the great truth that, whereas formed

infantry ready to receive a charge were virtually invulnerable to cavalry, infantry which presented an exposed flank could be cut down with dreadful ease. One of the cavalry regiments which charged Colborne's brigade was the First Polish Lancers of the Vistula. These horsemen were especially ruthless; they refused to accept the surrender of the bewildered British infantry; they speared the wounded as they lay on the ground; and a considerable number of them even broke through entirely and fell upon Beresford and his staff who were directing the battle from a position in the rear of Zayas' Spanish line. Before this danger passed Beresford and the staff officers about him had a brisk few minutes of it, parrying lance thrusts with their swords. An attempt by two British squadrons to fall on the flank and rear of the attacking French force was intercepted by another French cavalry unit and failed with loss. To make matters worse, Hoghton's infantry brigade, coming up to reinforce the Spanish line, opened fire on the Polish Lancers and carelessly shot many of the Spanish rear rank in the back. In spite of this, the Spanish infantry continued to stand firm and present a steady front to the French.

Beresford now deployed two brigades in the rear of the much-tried Spaniards and then managed to withdraw the Spanish troops to the flanks. The French, however, pressed their attack home. A period of very heavy fighting followed in which 1900 British infantry in two ranks were pitted against some 8000 Frenchmen who were twelve deep on an equal front. In the fire fight which followed, the loss in the British brigades was terrible. There was a constant "feeling to the centre" as the British line steadily shrank in size. Nevertheless the British were able not only to hold their own but also to advance slowly up to and beyond the point where the ground was littered with the wounded remnants of the previous Spanish line. In this phase of the battle, the 5th French Corps conducting the assault lost some 2000 of the 3000 casualties which were their total losses for the day.

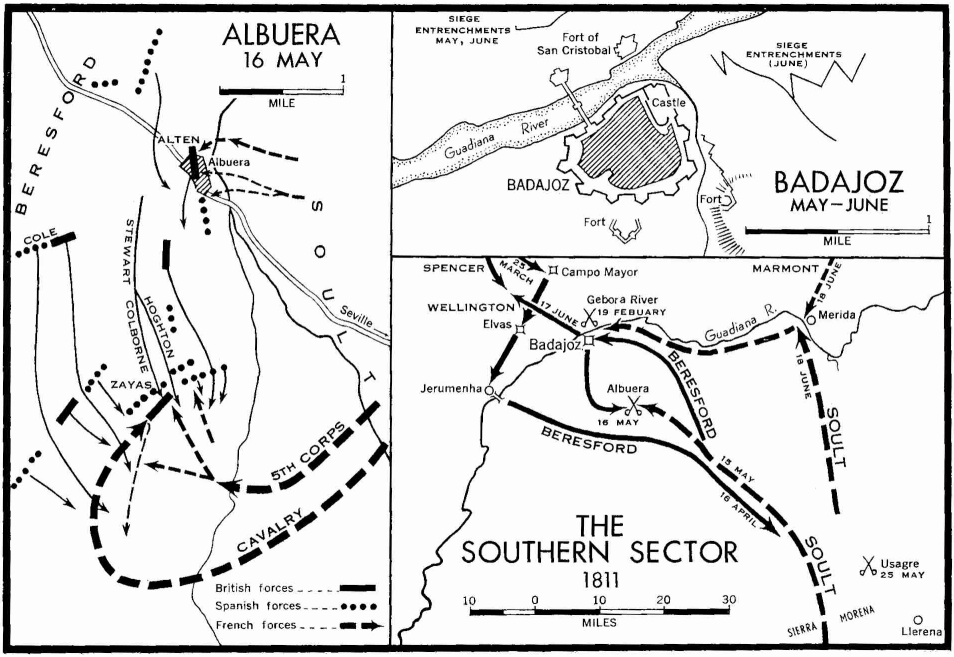
Soult now discovered from prisoners that Blake's Spaniards had joined the British before the battle and that he was in fact opposed by a force considerably superior to his own. At this, he forthwith determined not to press his attack home by engaging his reserve or by launching further cavalry charges. This sudden decision to turn an offensive battle into a purely defensive one may possibly have saved the day for the British.

Beresford, who was still apprehensive about his centre, was late in reinforcing the shrinking brigades on the right, but the British commander finally ordered Alten's King's German Legion out of Albuera village. These troops, however, never got back into the firing line that afternoon.

The turning point of the battle came when General Cole with his 4th Division, which Beresford had steadily declined to commit to the fighting, decided on his own initiative to advance to the relief of Hoghton's brigade. He was urged to do this both by the pleas of Colonel Hardinge, a young British officer who was Deputy Quartermaster General of the Portuguese Army, and also by the fact that he himself had for long minutes been anxiously watching the British brigade on the hilltop dwindling away to nothing before his eyes. It was a decision which required considerable moral courage, and it was fortunate for Cole that the event so completely vindicated him.

In spite of repeated French cavalry attacks, the 4th Division marched up and opened fire on the flank of the French 5th Corps. This at last caused the French to break and retreat. Soon the whole French attacking force had fled to the far side of the river.

There was no question of pursuit, for the British Army was as exhausted as the French. The Allied loss at Albuera was 5916, while the French loss has been estimated to have been in the neighbourhood of 7900.[6] As the battle drew to a close, a torrential rain began to fall, greatly increasing the misery of the 10,000 wounded men who lay on the field. On the following day neither side was strong enough to take the offensive and the two armies remained encamped a little distance from each other with no action taking place. Before dawn on the 18th Soult began his retreat, and the siege of Badajoz was resumed.



As Soult fell back to Llerena, the pursuit was marked by a cavalry action on 25 May at Usagre where the British won a brilliant little victory. Yet although the campaign ended on this high note, on 27 May Beresford was relieved from his active command in the field and returned to the task of training the Portuguese Army. Ostensibly this was done because the Portuguese service was falling into an unsatisfactory state, but actually Beresford's removal from the field was due to Wellington's dissatisfaction with the way he had conducted the campaign. It is, indeed, instructive to compare the two battles of Albuera and Fuentes de Oñoro, for they had much in common.[7] In both cases the British stood on the defensive; in both cases the French attacked by means of a wide flanking movement; and in both cases this indirect attack caused serious difficulties to the defenders. Yet, whereas Albuera was won by the courage of the troops and the initiative of subordinates rather than by the direction of the commander, the battle of Fuentes de Oñoro was never for a moment out of Wellington's control. This is the more significant when it is remembered that at Albuera the Allied army outnumbered the French by 35,000 to 25,000, while at Fuentes de Oñoro Wellington's 37,000 were opposed by 48,000 French. Fortunately, General Rowland Hill, a resolute and enterprising soldier, had just returned to the Peninsula to take command of the 2nd Division, and Wellington

would in future be able to entrust to him the command of the entire southern detachment of the British Army.

The Second British Siege of Badajoz May-June 1811

Even though Wellington knew that the French might ultimately be able to concentrate against him in superior numbers, he decided that it would be worthwhile to try to capture Badajoz in the time available. He calculated that he might have a month in which to take the fortress. As he wrote to Lord Liverpool on 23 May, "Fortunately for me, the French armies have no communication, and one army has no knowledge of the position or of the circumstances in which the others are placed; whereas I have a knowledge of all that passes on all sides. From this knowledge I think I may draw troops from Beira for my operations against Badajoz; but I cannot venture further south till I shall get Ciudad Rodrigo, without exposing all to ruin."[8] And again to the same correspondent on the following day he wrote, "I do not know when Marmont will be ready to co-operate with Soult: however, as the siege of Badajoz can be raised with so much ease, and without loss of any kind, whenever it may be necessary, I have thought it best to lose no time about it, and to adopt every means to get that place, if I can, before the enemy's troops can join; and if I cannot, to raise the siege and fight a battle, or not, as I may find most proper, according to the state of our respective forces."[9] Since he believed that Marmont would be too busy for several weeks reinforcing his army to take serious offensive action in the north, Wellington left Sir Brent Spencer in command in this sector and moved south himself with two divisions.

The French garrison in Badajoz under General Phillipon numbered only about 3000 men, while the besieging British totalled some 14,000. However, Wellington suffered from two serious handicaps. In the first place, the British siege artillery was still completely inadequate for the reduction of so strong a fortress, and secondly, the British engineers, in spite of their excellent work at the Lines of Torres Vedras, were both few in number and lamentably inexperienced in siegecraft.

On the advice of his engineers, who argued that since time was short it would be better to strike at decisive points, Wellington decided to assault the two strongest positions in Badajoz, the fort of San Cristobal and the Castle. This decision is the more remarkable in the light of the experience of the first attempted siege when it was discovered that only three inches of topsoil covered the bedrock before San Cristobal. Even this scanty soil had largely been removed by the efforts of the French governor who, making good use

of his respite between 15 and 18 May, had had large quantities of earth removed and thrown into a nearby ravine. The problem posed by the siege of Castle Hill, although different, was equally difficult. The hill here was composed of a clay-slate which did not crumble no matter how much it was pounded by artillery. Thus, since the Castle wall was simply a stone facing to the soil, it remained erect in the face of the most prolonged bombardment.

The blockade of Badajoz was resumed on 18 May, and on 29 May the siege-work proper began. Although many casualties were caused by French fire from San Cristobal and the Castle, by 3 June the British batteries were at last in place and firing. They made little impression on the fortress, and—what was worse—the number of British guns in operation rapidly began to decrease, some being put out of action by the French, and many more either shaking to pieces by their own recoil or drooping at the muzzle after prolonged firing.

When the parapets of San Cristobal were shot away, the debris fell down into the ditch which surrounded the fort, but the good results which were expected from this were minimized by the fact that at night the French were able to put working parties into the ditch to clear it. Thus the distance between the bottom of the ditch and the breaches which were finally made in the walls was greater than the British engineers believed. At midnight on 6-7 June the first attempt was made to storm San Cristobal. A party of 180 men managed to get scaling ladders into the ditch only to find that they still could not reach the breach. After 92 of their number had been killed or wounded, the remainder withdrew.

There followed three more days of artillery preparation before the attempt was made again on the night of 9 June. This time the storming party was 400 strong, but this attack failed in its turn, with a loss of 130 men.

At noon on the following day Wellington gathered together his senior officers to tell them that he had determined to abandon the siege. At the close of his address, after having explained the reasons for failure, he is said to have muttered, more to himself than to his audience, “The next time, I’ll be my own engineer.”[10] He was careful, however, not to rebuke publicly the men who had provided him with the Lines of Torres Vedras the year before.

Wellington’s decision to raise the siege of Badajoz was made because he learned that, just as he had anticipated might happen, Marmont was marching south with 30,000 men to aid Soult. When, on 17 June Soult’s army of 28,000 made contact with Marmont’s force at Merida, Wellington at once retired behind the Guadiana and re-united his army.

By 22 June Marmont and Soult knew that Wellington had turned to stand on the defensive between Campo Mayor and Elvas. Although the French commanders were not aware of the details of the British position, they knew that Wellington had some 54,000 men at his disposal. Nor did they display any eagerness to attack the British commander in a defensive position of his own choice. Viewed in retrospect, this reluctance to fight a general action is significant, for it marked a noticeable decline in the offensive spirit of the French in the Peninsula.

Between 23 and 28 June, the French remained inactive some nine miles from the British position, and then Soult returned with his army to Seville. Marmont remained in position for a further two weeks, then dispersed his force into cantonments. With the threat in the south thus dissipated, Wellington again divided his army, leaving a southern force of some 13,000 under General Hill, and himself returning to the northern theatre of operations.

The Blockade of Ciudad Rodrigo August-September 1811

Although he was never very hopeful of capturing Ciudad Rodrigo and had indeed advised the British Government before he started that the operation might have to be abandoned, Wellington decided to blockade that fortress. “I am tempted to try this enterprise”, he wrote to Lord Liverpool. “But I beg Your Lordship to observe that I may be obliged to abandon it. In a case in which the relative force of the two armies will be so nearly balanced as in this, and particularly in an operation in the Peninsula of Spain, it is impossible for me to foresee all the events which may lead to this result. But the arrival of reinforcements to the enemy, or further information of the enemy’s force, which may show them to be stronger than I now imagine them to be, or the falling off of the strength of our army owing to the sickness of the troops, which I do not now expect, would necessarily oblige me to abandon the enterprise.”[11]

By 11 August Wellington had settled down to the investment of Ciudad Rodrigo. Yet it could only be a blockade and not a siege, because the British Army still did not have the heavy artillery necessary to breach the walls. This handicap was likely to be temporary, however, since a battering train had at long last arrived from England. Wellington had sent it from Lisbon to Oporto by sea from whence it was even now in the process of being dragged painfully across country towards the scene of operations. In actual fact, as we shall see, the siege train did not reach Ciudad Rodrigo in 1811 but was eventually left at Villa da Ponte.

Both the adverse possibilities which Wellington had mentioned to Liverpool now came to pass. Marmont, who had been heavily reinforced from France, was able by mid-September to advance with an army of some 60,000 men, while the British Army, on the other hand, was depleted by 14,000 sick. Most of these ineffectives were ill with the Guadiana fever which they had contracted around Elvas, but the heat of the Spanish summer had also brought out the fever which had been latent in the bones of the men who had taken part in the ill-fated Walcheren expedition. Because of the disparity in numbers between his force and Marmont's, Wellington did not dare to risk a general action in the open plains around Ciudad Rodrigo where the French cavalry could have been used to good advantage. Therefore, on 20 September he gave the orders to abandon the blockade. He had already chosen, as was his invariable practice, two possible battlegrounds where he could make a stand. One of these was at Fuenteguinaldo and the other, farther to the rear, in front of Sabugal. Yet, since he did not believe that Marmont would advance much beyond Ciudad Rodrigo, the British commander did not concentrate his army before he pulled it back but allowed the various formations to remain dispersed over a considerable area of countryside.

The French reached Ciudad Rodrigo on 23 September and resupplied the fortress, but instead of remaining inactive as Wellington had hoped, Marmont pushed out his cavalry in energetic reconnaissances. On 25 September there were two sharp cavalry combats at El Bodon and at Aldeia da Ponte. The former of these engagements revealed to Marmont Wellington's true dispositions and the extent to which the British commander had allowed his army to be dispersed. Rather belatedly Wellington gave orders for the army to retire, first to Fuenteguinaldo and later even farther to the rear. On 26 September, when the British were still not concentrated, Marmont faced Wellington with very superior numbers, but fortunately the French general displayed no desire to attack. Wellington's past successes on the defensive now stood him in good stead, for Marmont reasoned that when the British commander showed a confident front and appeared willing to accept battle, his position must be good. The bluff worked only because of what had happened at Talavera, Busaco and Fuentes de Oñoro. In any case, Marmont did not attack, and by 28 September Wellington had managed to unite his army at Aldeia da Ponte. Marmont thereupon retired to Ciudad Rodrigo and the British Army dispersed into cantonments.

Except for a brilliant little victory in Estremadura in October, when General Hill surprised and routed a French force which had pushed too far

from its base in search of food, there was no more campaigning in 1811. For the British the year did not appear by any means to have been a completely successful one. The two sieges of Badajoz had failed and the blockade of Ciudad Rodrigo had had to be abandoned. Thus the two great gates into Spain were still in French hands. And although at Fuentes de Oñoro and at Albuera the British had indeed won victories, neither of these had been decisive, while the latter especially had been extremely costly. Nevertheless such a superficial judgement would not give a true picture of what had happened in the Peninsula in 1811. If the British had not been conspicuously successful, the French had fared much worse. Something intangible, but extremely important, had taken place. Although it would not be clearly apparent until the following year, the offensive spirit of the French had at last been broken and the initiative for further operations had passed into Wellington's hands.

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[1] Oman, IV, 203.

[2] *Dispatches*, VII, 467.

[3] W. F. P. Napier, *History of the War in the Peninsula*, IV, 513.

[4] Oman, IV, 340.

[5] *Supplementary Dispatches*, VII, 177.

[6] Oman, IV, 395-6.

[7] In compiling the foregoing account of the battles of Fuentes de Oñoro and Albuera, the principal sources consulted were: for Fuentes de Oñoro, *Dispatches*, VIII, 528-534; Oman, IV, 315-348; Fortescue, VIII, 155-170. For Albuera, *Dispatches*, VII, 587-594 (the note which begins on page 588 gives Marshal Beresford's letter to Wellington containing his own account of the battle); Oman, IV, 363-403; Fortescue, VIII, 183-209. Napier's famous account of Albuera (III, 534-558), although written in his usual vivid style, is not to be much relied upon, since he was not present (Beresford indeed later suggested that he could never even have seen the ground) and since his enmity to Beresford made him a prejudiced narrator.

[8] *Dispatches*, VII, 599.

[9] *Ibid.*, 605.

[10] George Wrottesley, *Life and Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir John Burgoyne* (London, 1873), 135.

[11] *Dispatches*, VII, 119.

Chapter VII

The Campaign of 1812

The Siege of Ciudad Rodrigo

The initial French reverses of 1812 are almost entirely attributable to the mistakes of the Emperor. To Napoleon in Paris, which he had by now made the centre of a great European empire, the Iberian Peninsula seemed a far-off corner of his domains, distant from the heart of affairs, where neither victories nor defeats could have the same decisive influence as comparable events on the Danube, the Elbe, or the Vistula. Yet this attitude, which often made him impatient of the complaints and indifferent to the problems of his marshals in Spain, nevertheless did not prevent the Emperor from attempting to direct the Spanish war. Furthermore Napoleon never appreciated the peculiar difficulties of campaigning in the Peninsula. When he had entered Spain in 1808 he had travelled down the main metalled road from Bayonne to Madrid, and he remembered that road too well. It was the only one of its kind in Spain, but Napoleon could never be brought to believe this. He continually gave orders which might have been feasible in campaigns elsewhere in Western Europe but which were entirely unrealistic in the light of Spanish conditions. Thus in 1812 Wellington was able to take the offensive only because Marmont's army had been seriously weakened by the withdrawal of troops, while the British attack would not have succeeded except for the faulty dispositions which were imposed upon Marmont by Napoleon.

Towards the end of 1811, the Emperor, who had already decided on a war with Russia, began to draw off men from Spain for the impending campaign in the East. All the infantry of the Guard and all the Polish cavalry regiments were ordered back to France, so that French strength in the Peninsula was reduced by some 27,000 veteran troops. Moreover, this withdrawal so weakened Marshal Suchet that Napoleon gave orders for a detachment of 10,000 under Montbrun to be dispatched from the Army of Portugal to assist Suchet in the investment of Valencia.

When Wellington learned of this weakening of Marmont's army he decided to strike at Ciudad Rodrigo. On 1 January, 1812, he wrote to Lord Liverpool ". . . if I should not succeed, I shall at least bring back some of the

troops of the armies of the north, and of Portugal; and shall so far relieve the guerrillas and the Spanish armies in Valencia."[1]

Since Ciudad Rodrigo had been revictualled in November 1811, Wellington knew that the abundance of food in the fortress would necessitate a regular siege. Therefore, with his usual foresight, he had ordered Colonel Dickson to bring up his heavy siege train from its position at Villa da Ponte eighty miles away, and had arranged for an adequate supply of fascines and gabions to be constructed. By 5 January all the British divisions had been moved up to the line of the Agueda, and on the following day Wellington, protected by a strong bodyguard, made a close reconnaissance of Ciudad Rodrigo. On 8 January the British Army closed in and invested the fortress.

On the same day on which Wellington closed his cordon around Ciudad Rodrigo, Blake surrendered Valencia to Suchet. The French had had to fight hard to take this city, and when it fell the French marshal dealt bloodily with its inhabitants, executing several hundred and deporting 500 friars and 350 university students to France. Meanwhile Montbrun, whose expedition had not been of any substantial help to Suchet, had decided to conduct an ill-considered raid of his own on Alicante. As might have been expected, the raid proved to be a fiasco whose only tangible result was that the Army of Portugal was for a further two weeks incapable of moving to the relief of Ciudad Rodrigo.

The French garrison in that city was too small to defend all the fortifications properly. Yet although the defenders numbered just under 2000, they were lavishly provided with artillery, since the entire siege train of the Army of Portugal, amounting to 153 heavy guns, was stationed there. This was undoubtedly too far forward for equipment of such value to be held. Artillery heavy enough to batter down the walls of fortified towns was essential to the control of Spain, and when Wellington captured Marmont's siege train, the denial of its use to the French was almost as great a loss to them as its possession was a gain to the British.

On the crest of an outlying hill near Ciudad Rodrigo the French had constructed a redoubt which so guarded the approaches to the main wall that it was necessary to capture this outwork as a preliminary to beginning the siege proper. Accordingly, on 8 January, Wellington ordered the Light Division to storm this fort by a night attack without any preparatory bombardment. These tactics were happily successful. Surprise was complete, and the redoubt fell with little loss to a storming party under Colonel John Colborne. As soon as the fort was in British hands, digging

began at once. The night was dark and a cold, sleety rain fell, but the wet earth was moved easily and settled well. By dawn the first parallel was almost completed.

For the next few days entrenchment continued under a heavy artillery fire which caused numerous British casualties. By now the ground was covered with snow, and the besieging army had neither huts nor tents.[2] However, the soldiers were in good spirits, for they had already acquired that confidence in their commander and themselves which comes only from a succession of victories. On the night of 13-14 January a second parallel was begun. Since the working parties were now enfiladed from the fortified convent of Santa Cruz, this fort was stormed on the night of 14 January, but a French sortie the next morning recaptured it. The following night the British took the outlying convent of San Francisco, which had been fortified and garrisoned by the French. With the fall of San Francisco, the French governor saw he could no longer spare the men to garrison outlying posts, so he abandoned Santa Cruz. Wellington's guns were now placed in position and began to batter two breaches in the walls.

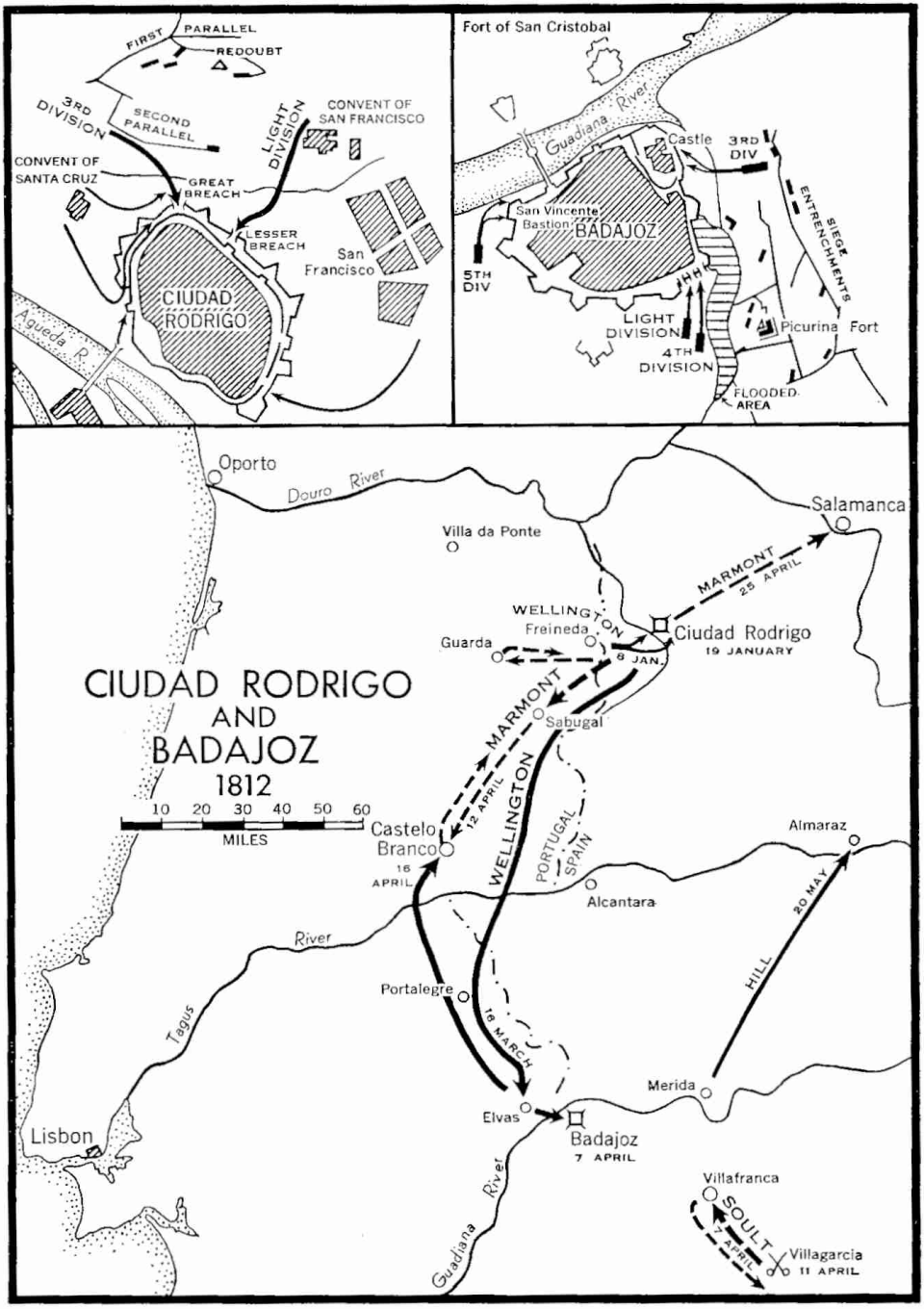
On the afternoon of 18 January, Wellington went forward to one of the most advanced trenches for a final reconnaissance. A great breach had by now been made on the northern walls and a lesser but still practicable one opposite San Francisco. After viewing these breaches, Wellington decided that an attack was feasible. Crouching there under the walls of Ciudad Rodrigo, the British commander dictated his orders for the assault.

The attack began at seven o'clock on the evening of 19 January, a time chosen because it was by then dark enough to cover the movement of the assaulting troops while the night would not be far enough advanced for the French to have taken advantage of it to repair the damage which the guns had caused during the day. The 3rd Division assaulted the Great Breach and the Light Division the Lesser Breach. Very heavy fighting developed at the Great Breach and casualties were heavy, but the Light Division had easier work at the other point of attack. Unfortunately, General Craufurd, under whose iron hand the Light Division had achieved such an enviable reputation, was mortally wounded at the Lesser Breach just before his troops gained the ramparts. In both sectors, however, the defenders were forced to give way, and some infantrymen of the Light Division actually came upon the rear of the French who were retreating from the Great Breach. Once the British had broken into the town, a little street fighting followed, but the garrison soon surrendered. The siege had taken in all only twelve days, and the British loss during the operation was 1121.[3]

After the fall of Ciudad Rodrigo, the victorious troops began to get out of hand, breaking into brandy stores and pillaging private homes. The British officers, however, made great efforts to suppress these disorders. Many of them seized the barrels of broken muskets and waded into the masses of looters to belabour them with a will. Although some fires were started, the officers' exertions were successful and order was soon restored. No lives seem to have been lost, except for a few soldiers who were accidentally shot and a few who died from drinking raw liquor.

The Siege of Badajoz

The guerrilla bands of Julian Sanchez held the roads of Leon so well that news of the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo only reached Salamanca on 13 January. Marmont at Valladolid heard of it the following day. Later, when he learned that this important fortress had fallen after so brief a defence, the French commander was horrified. He was at once apprehensive for the safety of Badajoz, but Napoleon, still trying to direct the war from Paris, disregarded the marshal's arguments. Indeed, the Army of Portugal was now ordered to give up one division of 6000 men to the Army of the North. All this time, the Emperor plagued Marmont with impossible orders and with reproaches as unjust as they were infuriating. Napoleon argued that Badajoz could not safely be attacked by the British because, if Wellington moved south, Marmont could then march into Portugal and occupy Lisbon. Marmont's reply—that such a move was impossible for his army since it could not be fed *en route*—made no impression on the Emperor. Throughout February and most of March, Marmont was forbidden to march south to protect Badajoz (a move which he was most anxious to make), but was urged instead to invade Portugal. When on 27 March he was finally authorized to move towards Badajoz, that fortress had already been invested for eleven days and his army had already begun its reluctant invasion of Portugal.


FIRST PARALLEL
REDOUBT
3RD DIVISION
SECOND PARALLEL
LIGHT DIVISION
CONVENT OF SAN FRANCISCO
CONVENT OF SANTA CRUZ
GREAT BREACH
LESSER BREACH
San Francisco
CIUDAD RODRIGO
Agueda R.
Fort of San Cristobal
Guadiana River
Castle
3RD DIV
ENTRENCHMENTS
SIEGE
San Vincente Bastion
BADAJOZ
5TH DIV
LIGHT DIVISION
4TH DIVISION
Picurina Fort
FLOODED AREA
CIUDAD RODRIGO AND BADAJOZ 1812
10 20 30 40 50 60
MILES
Oporto
Douro River
Villa da Ponte
Salamanca
MARMONT 25 APRIL
WELLINGTON
Freineda
Ciudad Rodrigo
19 JANUARY
Guarda
8 JAN.
MARMONT
Sabugal
12 APRIL
WELLINGTON
PORTUGAL
SPAIN
Castelo Branco
16 APRIL
Almaraz
Alcantara
20 MAY
HILL
River
Tagus
Portalegre
16 MARCH
Merida
Elvas
Badajoz
7 APRIL
Lisbon
Villafranca
SOULT
Guadiana River
Villagarcia
11 APRIL

Marmont's fears for the safety of Badajoz were fully justified. Within five days of the fall of Ciudad Rodrigo, Wellington was already issuing orders for a concentration in the south. Dickson's siege artillery was sent to Elvas, partly overland and partly by sea. Since it would take several weeks for the heavy guns to get into position for the siege, and since Wellington wished to keep his opponent uncertain as long as possible, the British Army did not begin to move until 19 February. On that date the British divisions began to slip away one by one from the northern front, until by 16 March the entire Army except one division was concentrated at Elvas. On 5 March, Wellington left his northern headquarters at Freineda and, travelling with his customary speed, reached the southern theatre a week later. Only Spanish and Portuguese troops were left in front of Marmont in the north, plus one hussar regiment of the King's German Legion about Ciudad Rodrigo.

The third and successful attempt to take Badajoz was conducted very differently from the previous two. This time Wellington was reasonably well supplied with the means of investing a fortress. Although still short of qualified sappers and miners, he had 52 heavy guns, an adequate supply of gabions and fascines, and a pontoon train. Yet because Wellington feared that Marmont might march south, as he had in fact wished to do, the siege of Badajoz, like that of Ciudad Rodrigo, was a time problem. If Soult moved to relieve the fortress, he could be dealt with, but Wellington believed that he could count on only about three weeks to take Badajoz before Marmont might arrive.

The fortress was invested on 16 March and a covering force in two strong columns was pushed out towards Villafranca and Merida to intercept and delay the advance of either Soult or Marmont. In addition, a Spanish force was under orders to move against Seville once Soult had marched to the relief of Badajoz.

The point of attack selected by Wellington was on the south-eastern circumference of the town, but as a necessary preliminary to this main effort an outlying fort, the Picurina, had to be stormed. Ground was broken on 17 March during a night of heavy rain and high wind which effectively deadened the sound of the pickaxes. By dawn the next day the first parallel opposite the Picurina had been completed.

The French garrison, some 4700 strong, was under the able and energetic command of Count Phillipon, and certainly the defenders did all, and more than all, that could be expected of them. On the 19th a French sortie met with some success, but the parallel was not destroyed. Between 20 and 24 March, heavy rain interfered badly with the siege work, but on the 24th the

weather improved and the guns could at last be brought into position. That night the Picurina fort was taken by storm. It was a desperate business which resulted in the loss of over half the 500-man storming party, but a subsequent French sortie to recapture the place was easily beaten off. For the next five days the British built their batteries in the Picurina fort, although they suffered heavily all this time from French fire. On 30 March the British guns in the Picurina opened up against the walls of Badajoz and by 4 April two practicable breaches had been made. Within the next two days a third breach was opened.

When Wellington heard that Soult was marching from Seville, he ordered the storm for the night of 6 April. All three breaches were to be attacked by the 4th and the Light Divisions. As an afterthought, Picton was given permission to attempt the desperate enterprise of escalading the Castle with the 3rd Division, while Leith's 5th Division was simultaneously to scale the bastion of San Vincente on the north-west side of the town.

Phillipon's defensive measures were extraordinarily thorough. The breaches were retrenched, thickly laid with buried shells and barrels of gunpowder which could be exploded by fuzes, and made virtually impregnable by artificial obstacles. Indeed if it had not been for the two escalades—forlorn hopes which were set only at the last moment and as an afterthought—the storm must have ended in a bloody repulse.

The assault did not begin until the great clock in the tower of Badajoz was striking the hour of ten. Then the attacking columns moved off under cover of the darkness.[4] Yet as the attackers closed to the three breaches they were met with a deadly fire from the ramparts. Each Frenchman was armed with three muskets, and with these volley after volley was poured in until the ranks of the assailants withered away. Moreover, the buried shells and barrels of gunpowder which had been laid in the breaches worked with a deadly perfection. Each of the assaulting divisions attacked with an advance party of 500 men, and virtually all of these were killed or wounded in the first rush. To make matters worse, all the guides were shot down, and as a consequence the two divisions became intermingled in the ditch. At the foot and slopes of the breaches the British dead were soon piled in their hundreds. As many as forty separate assaults were made against the breaches that night, but all to no avail. In this phase of the attack the Light Division had 68 officers and 861 other ranks killed or wounded out of 3000 while the 4th Division lost 84 officers and 841 other ranks out of 3500. The Portuguese troops who took part in the assault lost an additional 400.[5]

Yet while the assaults on the breaches were making no headway whatsoever, the subsidiary attacks were progressing surprisingly well. Although Picton's 3rd Division came early under fire at the Castle, the leading troops managed to reach the walls and rear scaling ladders. Two attempts to scale were repulsed with loss—both Picton and Kempt, a brigade commander, were wounded in this action—but a third attack, made at about 11 o'clock, succeeded. The defenders fought desperately from stair to stair in the keep, but by midnight the Castle was cleared. There were some 500 British and 200 Portuguese casualties in this attack.

Meanwhile, Leith, with a brigade of the 5th Division, assailed the bastion of San Vincente a little after 11 o'clock. After some hard fighting, a lower part of the wall was successfully scaled and the place taken. When a few hundred British had gathered there, they sallied forth along the ramparts, capturing the remaining western bastions one by one. Some British soldiers then got down into the streets where they made their way through the silent town to come upon the rear of the defenders at the breaches. Taken thus from behind, the French at the breaches soon surrendered, although Phillipon and a few hundred soldiers escaped into Fort San Cristobal, where they gave themselves up the next morning.

In view of what happened at Badajoz after its capture, it is only fair to say that the taking of the town was an exceptional military exploit. Wellington, who was not given to praise, wrote to Lord Liverpool: "The capture of Badajoz affords as strong an instance of the gallantry of our troops as has ever been displayed. But I greatly hope that I shall never again be the instrument of putting them to such a test as they were put to last night. I assure your Lordship that it is quite impossible to carry fortified places by *vive force* without incurring grave loss and being exposed to the chance of failure, unless the army should be provided with a sufficient trained corps of sappers and miners."[6] The somewhat rueful note in this dispatch may be accounted for by the fact that Allied casualties during the siege had amounted to the appalling total of 4924, of whom no less than 378 were officers.[7]

The day after Badajoz is said to have been one of the two occasions—the morrow of Waterloo being the other—when Wellington broke down and wept upon learning the extent of the casualty list.

In some measure, the exceptionally heavy loss among the commissioned ranks may have been responsible for what followed, for the officers who had been able to restrain their men at Ciudad Rodrigo were now many of them

dead. Be that as it may, by six o'clock in the morning of 7 April the British Army was completely out of hand. Ten thousand drunken soldiers were soon prowling the streets, their numbers augmented by some two hundred female camp-followers who were as rapacious as their men. An orgy of murder, rape, arson, and pillage ensued. Officers who attempted to restore order were murdered by their men; hundreds of wounded British were left to die while their comrades sacked the town; convents were broken into and nuns were violated in the streets; and anyone who attempted to interfere with the maddened horde was shot down in cold blood.

The plea that it was a custom of war in the early 19th century for a garrison to be massacred if it continued to resist after practical breaches had been made, cannot be advanced as any excuse for the wanton violence which was inflicted on an allied and friendly population. It would, however, be unfair to blame Wellington for the sack of Badajoz. The truth was that after the casualties at the breaches, the survivors, who in the nature of things probably included the worst elements of the Army, were beyond control. An eye witness later wrote of the event: "The men were permitted to enjoy themselves [sic] for the remainder of the day, and the usual frightful scene of plunder commenced, which officers thought it prudent to avoid for the moment by retiring to the camp."[8] Later on 7 April, Wellington wrote an unhappily phrased order in which he said: "It is now full time that the plunder of Badajoz should cease; an officer and six steady non-commissioned officers will be sent from each regiment, British and Portuguese, of the 3rd, 4th, 5th and Light Divisions into the town, at 5 a.m. tomorrow morning, to bring away any men still straggling there."[9] At the time when this order was issued, the troops had already been out of hand for over fifteen hours.

To one British officer at least, the sack of Badajoz brought happiness. Harry Smith, a brigade major in the Light Division, met a thirteen-year-old Spanish girl, Juana Maria de los Dolores de Leon, who with her sister had fled from the looters to the British camp. The two women, their ears still bleeding from having their earrings torn forcibly off by soldiers who would not bother to unclasp them, appealed to Smith and his friend Captain Kincaid for protection. A few days later Smith married Juana, and she accompanied him throughout the rest of the Peninsular War, an uncomplaining and courageous lady who won the respect and affection of everyone she met.[10]

The sack of Badajoz ended rather because of the exhaustion of the rioters than because of any disciplinary action. A gallows was erected in the

square outside the Cathedral, but no one was hanged. As the blood-lust and the liquor died out of the soldiers, they began to slink back to camp, until by nightfall the town had pretty well been cleared of its liberators.

The Salamanca Campaign

On 7 April, the day that Badajoz was captured, Soult arrived at Villafranca with 25,000 men, but when he heard of the fall of the fortress he retired at once towards Andalusia. Behind him, in the territory he had vacated, the Spanish commander Ballasteros was already moving against Seville with about 11,000 men, while Penne Villemur was converging simultaneously on the same city with a small force. By a series of forced marches Soult got back in time to intercept the Spaniards before they reached Seville, but they managed to retire before they could be brought to action. The only real fighting in the south occurred on 11 April when Stapleton Cotton, with three cavalry brigades, sharply defeated a French force under Drouet at Villagarcia.

Meanwhile in the north, Marmont prudently refused to attack Ciudad Rodrigo without a siege train and advanced instead towards Sabugal. He sent out flying columns to Castelo Branco on 12 April and to Guarda the following day. In the face of Marmont's advance, Victor Alten with the hussars of the King's German Legion retired hastily from before Ciudad Rodrigo without attempting to delay the enemy. Unfortunately, this needlessly rapid withdrawal prevented the fortress from being revictualled. To make matters worse, Alten, directly contrary to his orders, then fell back on Castelo Branco. It is instructive to note that in this case, as in the case of the numerous blunders of Sir William Erskine, Wellington, although angry, did not send the offender back to England. The reason for his forbearance probably was that he would have had no say in the choice of a successor. As he frequently complained, Wellington was denied any of the patronage which generals in his position customarily exercised, and he may well have considered that it was better to stick to incompetents whom he knew and who at least had some experience of conditions in the Peninsula rather than risk getting replacements who were not only equally inefficient but also totally ignorant of the peculiarities of warfare in Spain.[11]

On the night of 13-14 April, Trant's Portuguese were surprised by Marmont at Guarda and in their hurried retirement were completely routed by French cavalry. The next day when Marmont heard of the fall of Badajoz, he knew that Wellington would now be free to make a northward move against his communications, so the French commander immediately retired

to Sabugal, where he remained until 22 April. Just as Marmont had surmised, Wellington wasted no time in turning north. On 11 April he had directed his march on Ciudad Rodrigo, leaving Hill in the south with a corps of observation about 14,000 strong to contain Soult. This move was only partly offensive in nature, for although Wellington certainly hoped that he might cut off Marmont and bring him to battle, he was also apprehensive about the safety of Ciudad Rodrigo. Although Marmont was ignorant of his danger, he retreated from Sabugal to Salamanca in time to evade Wellington.

By now the whole of Europe was buzzing with speculation about the coming war between France and Russia. When Napoleon definitely decided that the Tsar would have to be taught a lesson, it became obvious that some new arrangements would have to be made for the direction of the war in Spain. Therefore the Emperor at last appointed King Joseph Commander-in-Chief, with Marshal Jourdan as his chief of staff. Although this was undoubtedly the right move to make, it was now too late to be effective. For the past three years the various French marshals in the Peninsula had operated independently, and this habit had by now become too deeply rooted to be changed by a mere stroke of the pen. Moreover, the Emperor had not in the past effectively supported King Joseph's authority, so that in the future the ruinous insubordination of the King's marshals—and especially of Marshal Soult—was at least to have the excuse of custom to justify it. Furthermore, appeals to the Emperor had been ineffectual enough when Napoleon had been in Paris, but once he had crossed the Niemen and become involved in the difficulties of his Russian campaign, they were worse than useless. To the harried man who, at Smolensk, Borodino, and Moscow, was finding an army a poor instrument for fighting a people, complaints from Spain were merely irrelevant irritations. For these reasons, the centralization of command which Napoleon had hoped to effect in Spain was never in fact achieved.

Marshal Jourdan summed up the situation admirably in his clear-sighted "*Mémoire* of May 1812". He said: "All offensive operations are impossible, as long as the imperial armies have to hold down the entirety of the occupied provinces. If Lord Wellington concentrates all his forces, he can march with 60,000 men (not including Spaniards) against either the Army of Portugal or the Army of the South. Neither of them can assemble a sufficient force to resist him, unless they abandon whole provinces. The King has ordered Soult and Marmont to march to each other's aid if either is attacked. But they have to unite, coming from remote bases, while the enemy can place himself between them and strike at one or the other. The lines of communication between them are long and circuitous. It is easily

conceivable that one of them may be attacked and beaten before the other is even aware of the danger. A catastrophe is quite possible if Lord Wellington should throw himself suddenly, with his whole force, upon either the Army of Portugal or that of the South."[12] The result of all this was that the 230,000 French soldiers in the five imperial armies in Spain were virtually helpless against the Spanish insurgents and Wellington's eight Anglo-Portuguese divisions.

As was usually the case, Wellington was extremely well informed of the French dispositions. A steady stream of intercepted dispatches flowed into his headquarters where Captain Scovell, his cypher secretary, was by now extremely competent at decoding them. Two considerations decided Wellington to move north of the Tagus against Marmont rather than in the south against Soult. In the first place, and probably most important, Ciudad Rodrigo could not safely be left for long. Secondly, Soult had retired so far that he was no longer an immediate danger.

Hill, therefore, was ordered to raid Almaraz and to destroy the bridge there across the Tagus. Carrying out these instructions, General Hill in a daring daylight attack captured Fort Napoleon, one of the two forts guarding the Almaraz crossing. The British turned the guns of the captured fort upon its twin and so forced the garrison out. Then they destroyed a considerable quantity of food and ammunition at Almaraz, completely demolished the forts and the bridgehead there, and returned to Merida.

While this was going on, Wellington moved the 1st and 6th Divisions under Graham to Portalegre. This move had two purposes, for it both provided support in Estremadura in case Soult should reinforce Drouet and it also helped deceive the French into believing that Soult rather than Marmont would be the recipient of the next British attack. Wellington now rebuilt the bridge at Alcantara, thus re-opening a route which shortened the communications between Estremadura and the frontiers of Leon by one hundred miles. This, plus the destruction of the Almaraz bridge, gave Wellington an advantage of ten to twelve marches over the French in moving troops from north to south or vice versa.

Having decided to attack Marmont, Wellington now began to concert various measures which would effectively isolate that general from the French armies elsewhere in the Peninsula. Ballasteros was again requested to move against Seville to keep Soult busy; Castaños was to threaten Marmont's flank and rear by operations in the Asturias; the French Army of the North was to be engaged by Spanish raids on Burgos; and a British naval expedition was to attack the forts on the Bay of Biscay coast. There was also

a plan to send from Sicily a large British expedition under Lord William Bentinck against Barcelona or Tarragona, and in spite of the fact that, owing to the vacillation of Lord William, this force did not sail on the date appointed, the news of such an invasion being imminent certainly prevented Marshal Suchet from sending reinforcements to any of his colleagues.

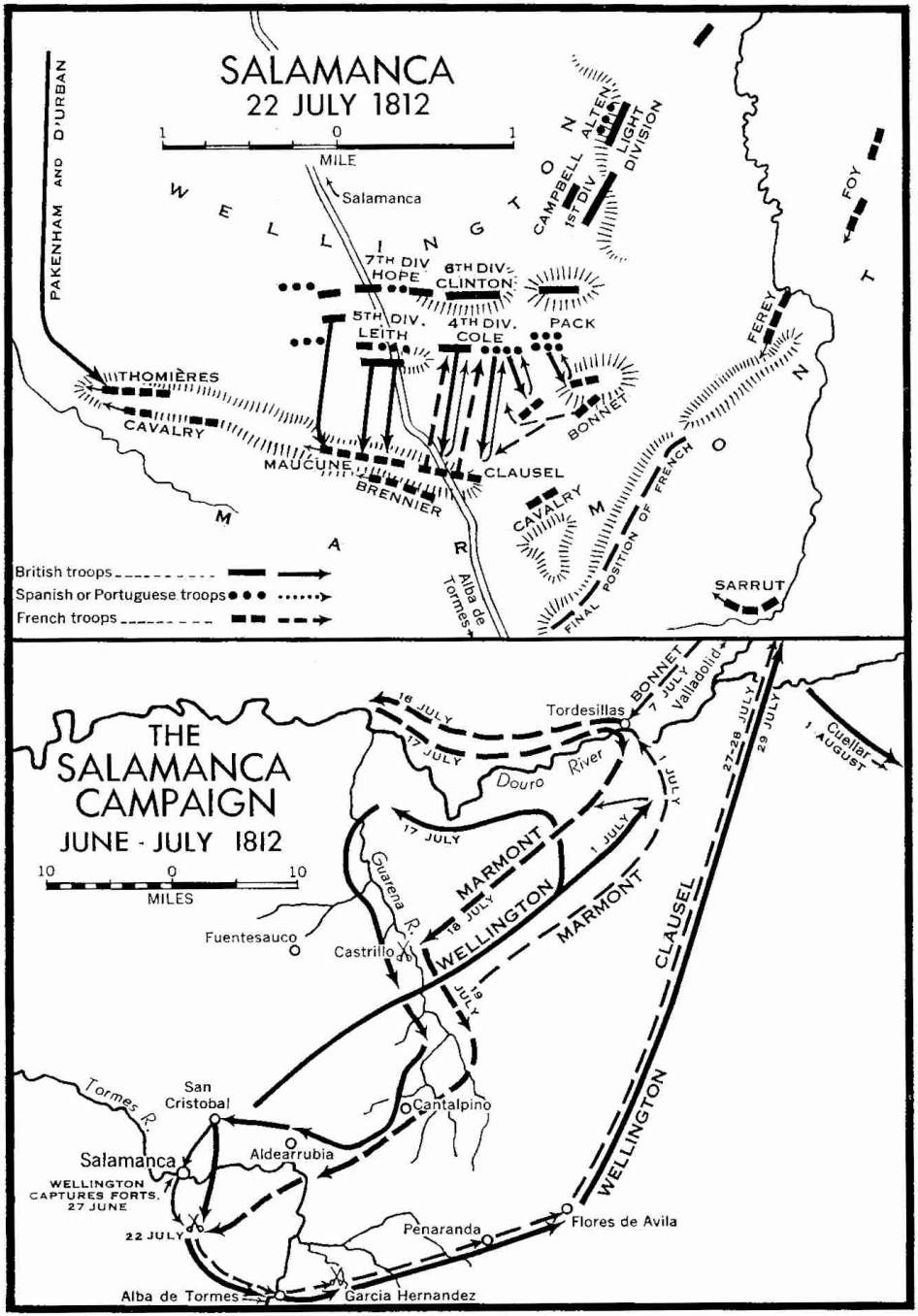
Although the military situation was extremely favourable to the British at this time, Wellington was much plagued by financial worries. He wrote to Lord Bathurst: "We owe not less than five million dollars. . . The Portuguese troops and establishments are likewise in the greatest distress; and it is my opinion, as well as that of Marshal Beresford, that we must disband part of that army unless I can increase the monthly payment of the subsidy. The Commissary-General has this day informed me that he is very apprehensive that he will not be able to make good his engagements for the payment for meat for the troops; and if we are obliged to stop that payment, your Lordship will do well to prepare to recall the army, for it will be impossible to carry up salt meat, as well as bread, for the troops from the sea coast . . . it is not improbable that we may not be able to take advantage of the enemy's comparative weakness in this campaign *for sheer want of money*."[13] Apparently a few weeks later the situation had not appreciably improved for Wellington wrote: "We are absolutely bankrupt. The troops are now five months in arrears, instead of one month in advance. The staff have not been paid since February; the muleteers not since June 1811; and we are in debt in all parts of the country."[14] This deplorable situation was not really the fault of the British Government. Large amounts of specie were in fact sent to Spain, but Britain herself was now desperately short of precious metal. Yet although the financial situation in Spain was never anything but precarious, temporary relief was always afforded in time in spite of Wellington's gloomy predictions, and the British Army was never in fact immobilized for want of money.

On 13 June in what was, significantly, the first major offensive move since the Talavera campaign of 1809, Wellington crossed the Agueda and marched towards Salamanca. His army now totalled some 48,000, including 3500 cavalry, and was composed of 28,000 British, 17,000 Portuguese and 3000 Spaniards.

Marmont was well aware that he was about to be attacked, but because he was so short of transport and because his Army did not have sufficient food in any one area for it to maintain a prolonged concentration, the French general was unable to gather his troops together before the attack actually developed. Therefore Marmont decided that his concentration area would

have to be east of Salamanca. When he received word of Wellington's advance, the French commander at last issued concentration orders, and by 19 June his army, except for Bonnet's force of 6000 in the Asturias, was assembled at Fuentesauco. Marmont now had at his disposal some 40,000 men, a force appreciably weaker, though more homogeneous, than his opponent's. Significantly too, the French were for the first time inferior in cavalry, about 2800 to 3500, for the Army of Portugal had not yet recovered from its loss of horses during Masséna's retreat.

With this disparity in numbers, Marmont had no intention of fighting Wellington on a chosen position of his own, but planned merely to contain him until Bonnet's troops arrived and until he got reinforcements from Caffarelli's Army of the North and possibly from Soult. Wellington, however, hoped to be attacked again, and with this end in view had already chosen a position below the heights of San Cristobal north-east of Salamanca for his killing ground. On the night of 17 June the British Army lay encamped around Salamanca and Wellington established his headquarters in the city amid wild scenes of Spanish rejoicing.


SALAMANCA
22 JULY 1812
1 0 1
MILE
PAKENHAM AND D'URBAN
Salamanca
WELLINGTON
ALTEN LIGHT DIVISION
CAMPBELL 1ST DIV
7TH DIV HOPE
6TH DIV CLINTON
PACK
5TH DIV. LEITH
4TH DIV. COLE
THOMIÈRES
CAVALRY
MAUCUNE
BRENNIER
CLAUSEL
BONNET
CAVALRY
FEREY
FOY
FINAL POSITION OF FRENCH
SARRUT
Alba de Tormes
British troops
Spanish or Portuguese troops
French troops
THE SALAMANCA CAMPAIGN
JUNE - JULY 1812
10 0 10
MILES
Tordesillas
Valladolid
BONNET 7 JULY
16 JULY
17 JULY
Douro River
1 JULY
27-28 JULY
29 JULY
Cuellar 1 AUGUST
17 JULY
MARMONT
18 JULY
WELLINGTON
Guarena R.
Fuentesauco
Castrillo
19 JULY
CLAUSEL
Tormes R.
San Cristobal
Cantalpino
Salamanca
Aldearrubia
WELLINGTON CAPTURES FORTS, 27 JUNE
22 JULY
Penaranda
Flores de Avila
Alba de Tormes
Garcia Hernandez

It was Wellington's hope that, by laying siege to the three Salamanca forts which Marmont had left garrisoned, the French general could be induced to attack. However, Wellington probably regretted having left his heavy artillery in Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida when on a closer inspection the forts proved to be stronger than he had believed. Nevertheless the British began to bombard them with what light guns were available. On 20 June, just as Wellington had hoped, Marmont advanced towards him, and late in the afternoon of that day the British took up their battle position. Wellington confidently expected to be attacked in the morning. Dawn of 21 June, however, did not bring the anticipated French attack, for Marmont's two rearmost divisions had not yet arrived upon the scene. All that day the British staff rather impatiently awaited the order for an advance, but in spite of the fact that he had a superiority of 10,000, Wellington refused to take the offensive. The only possible explanation of this is that he was hoping for another great defensive victory. It must be remembered too that the Allied army was a heterogeneous force which, although it had proved itself time and again in more or less static defensive roles, had not yet been tried under the more fluid conditions of an offensive battle. Probably in the weeks that followed Wellington was to regret his caution on this occasion, even though in the outcome it was to be so splendidly vindicated.

Marmont would seem to have had every intention of obliging Wellington with a battle, but at a council of war on 21 June, Clausel and Foy, his best divisional commanders, so strongly advised against an attack that he reluctantly abandoned his plan. On the night of 22 June, therefore, the French army retired to a distance of some six miles. Wellington did not pursue but merely reconnoitred the new French position with his cavalry. On the following night he ordered an escalade against one of the Salamanca forts, a desperate enterprise which was viewed pessimistically by most of the army. The event was to prove the army right and its commander wrong, for the assault failed with heavy loss. Sieges, it must be noted, were never Lord Wellington's strong point.

Between this unsuccessful attempt and 26 June, when a convoy of heavy guns and ammunition arrived from Almeida, nothing much was done. Then once again Wellington almost got the battle which he so much desired. On the 26th Marmont heard from Caffarelli that the expected reinforcements of 8000 would not arrive because of the threatened landing from a British fleet off the Biscay coast. It seems almost certain that Marmont then decided to attack, inferior as he was, but after a heavy bombardment on the 26th and 27th the Salamanca forts surrendered. Upon learning this, Marmont changed his mind and retreated while it was still dark on the morning of 28 June,

directing his army north-east towards Valladolid so that he might take up a defensive position behind the Douro and pick up Bonnet's reinforcements.

During all this period, Soult was steadfast in his refusal to send any troops north to the aid of Marmont, while Caffarelli, as we shall see, was kept fully occupied by the British naval diversion on the Biscay coast. Only King Joseph and Jourdan appreciated the true situation in the Peninsula, and it is much to Joseph's credit that he now made the hard decision of abandoning Madrid and marching to the Douro with his own force of 14,000 men. Although in the event this move came too late to assist Marmont, it was undoubtedly the soldierly thing to do. With all his faults, Joseph was, after all, also a Bonaparte.

On 7 July Bonnet joined Marmont, thereby giving the French commander a total force of approximately 46,000, an army almost equal in size to Wellington's. The French cavalry was still decidedly weak, but Marmont, by taking the drastic and unpopular measure of requisitioning the extra horses which many officers kept for riding, managed to get about 1000 additional mounts.

Thus reorganized, Marmont decided to recross the Douro and take the offensive. Before blaming him for this move it must be remembered that he did not know that King Joseph was bringing him reinforcements. He calculated, moreover, that his almost equal but homogeneous force was superior in quality to the Allied army, and—most important of all—he underestimated Wellington's willingness or ability either to manœuvre or to take the offensive. He regarded the British commander as a cautious, defensive general against whom it was safe to take risks. Considering the information which was available to Marmont at the time, all these reasons were sufficiently cogent to make Napoleon's later denunciation of his marshal seem unjust and carping.

On 16 July Marmont very cleverly feinted at the British left, then counter-marched during the hours of darkness, and moved against the isolated British right. Wellington, deceived as Marmont intended, conformed to the French feint, and so the counter-march brought Marmont neatly across the Douro. On learning how he had been tricked, Wellington went in person to his right wing on the morning of 18 July. In the upshot, the most dangerous part of this episode was the personal danger to Wellington himself, for a French cavalry charge momentarily swept away both the British commander and Beresford together with their staffs. There was a brisk few minutes in which Wellington had to draw his sword to defend

himself, but the British cavalry managed to extricate both their commander and themselves.

With the French across the Douro, the British Army retired and concentrated behind the Guarena River. The same day there was a sharp cavalry combat at Castrillo in which a French attack was beaten back with heavy loss. The next day, 19 July, the French Army marched some distance to the south in an endeavour to get around the British right wing, but the Allies, conforming to this movement, did not have their position turned. On 20 July the French again moved south with the same object in view, and throughout this day the British marched parallel to the French, the two armies proceeding in plain sight of one another across exceedingly flat countryside, sometimes only a few hundred yards apart. On this occasion the French proved once again that they were still able to outmarch their opponents, for they covered some fifteen miles during the day against the British twelve, and almost succeeded in turning the British right. When in the afternoon Marmont halted some guns at the village of Cantalpino and began to fire upon the leading British battalions, Wellington swerved slightly to the westward and so refused battle. The long parallel march continued throughout the day, but at nightfall the British commander halted his force on a good defensive position around the village of Aldearrubia.

On the morning of 21 July Marmont crossed the Tormes River to Wellington's right and in the afternoon, when most of the French were over, Wellington also moved across the Tormes to a new defensive position on the other side. That night, when the two armies lay encamped near each other, a wild thunderstorm occurred, so intense that many cavalry horses, frightened by the thunder and lightning, broke away. By midnight, however, the rain ceased and the soldiers were able to sleep. The next morning revealed a hard, bright July day without clouds.

On 22 July Marmont intended to continue his turning movement, in the expectation that Wellington would conform as before without taking the offensive. Indeed if the British commander had not been offered some concrete advantage, this is very probably what would have happened, for Wellington was prepared to sacrifice Salamanca and retire on Ciudad Rodrigo rather than fight without the certainty of victory.[15] In fact, on the morning of this day, Wellington actually sent off his baggage train towards the Portuguese frontier. As he wrote to Graham two days later: "Marmont ought to have given me a *pont d'or*, and he would have made a handsome operation of it."[16]

On the morning of 22 July the British Army was deployed along a position some three miles in length. The troops were for the most part out of sight of the French, being concealed by the reverse slopes of which Wellington was so fond. The French lay opposite with a refused right wing. Before long Marmont began to extend his left, moving out to the flank in the same manœuvre as in the past few days. By two o'clock in the afternoon Marmont, believing that Wellington's retreat had already begun and hoping to fight an advantageous action late in the day against only a part of the British Army, had dangerously extended his left wing, and had at the same time pressed in so close with his centre that he could not extricate himself without fighting. When it became apparent that Marmont had continued to extend his left until a considerable gap appeared between the divisions there and the central portions of his line, Wellington suddenly made up his mind to attack. The report of continued French movement towards the British right was brought to him while he was eating a belated lunch on a hilltop. He looked for a long moment through his telescope, then shut the glass with a decisive snap. "By God!" he said, with his mouth still full of sandwich, "that will do."

Indeed, the French Army was now no longer in battle order, but had been extended in a great arc which, although it overlapped both ends of the Allied line, was nowhere in sufficient depth. More dangerously, Pakenham with the 3rd Division lay to the right rear of the British Army, ready either to act as rearguard if a retirement should be decided upon or to play just such an offensive role as actually fell to his lot. The French left especially was overextended, but there was also a serious gap between the French right and centre. Perhaps because this was the first occasion on which Wellington had ventured to attack, he determined to issue his battle orders in person. First of all he galloped hard to the right rear of his army where his brother-in-law, Edward Pakenham, had the 3rd Division, then he rode swiftly back to General Leith and General Cole in the centre. His orders were short and to the point, and they were to be brilliantly executed.

A hot artillery duel had already begun, in which the French, since they outnumbered the British in guns by nearly three to two, were getting decidedly the better of it. In this exchange, just before four o'clock in the afternoon, Marmont was severely wounded by a British shell. Yet the loss of the French commander did not in fact have any influence upon the ensuing battle. It was already too late for the French Army to be disengaged or to be saved from defeat. Wellington's attack began at 4:40 p.m. when Pakenham, marching in from far on the British right rear with the 3rd Division and D'Urban's Portuguese cavalry, crashed into Thomières' division. This force

was taken completely by surprise and within a few minutes it was broken and in flight. In this portion of the engagement the French lost 2130 men out of 4500.[17] Pakenham and D'Urban, after such a brilliantly successful beginning, continued on their way to attack the next French formation.

The British attack in the centre was delivered appreciably later than the attack on the right because Wellington had ordered Leith not to advance with his 5th Division until a cavalry force had come up to cover his right flank. The delay made little difference. Behind the British 5th and 4th Divisions were the 6th and 7th Divisions, making in all a mass of troops more than sufficient for the work in hand. The French line, moreover, was still dangerously thin. Although Brennier's division hurried to take ground in the French battle line, both Sarrut's and Ferey's divisions were too far away to reach the French centre in time. The blue-coated squares broke under Leith's infantry attack, and then the British dragoons, commanded most gallantly by Le Marchant, charged home.[18] In the French ranks all order was at once lost, and although many gallant French soldiers continued to resist until they were cut down, nothing could now save this portion of Marmont's army except a headlong flight. The wreck of the French left centre was complete.

The attack on the French right centre, which was delivered by Cole's 4th Division and Pack's Portuguese, was far less fortunate in its outcome. Cole was wounded early in the action and a French counter-attack drove the Portuguese and British back so that a gap now appeared between the 5th and 4th Divisions. Upon seeing this, Clausel, who had now assumed command of the French Army, boldly decided to break Wellington's centre. He therefore launched an attack in an attempt to exploit the gap between the British divisions. This resulted in some heavy fighting for half an hour, but Wellington had ample reserves on hand, and when Clausel's counter-attack was met by the intact British 6th Division, the French centre suffered the same fate as had their left. Marmont's troops again broke and fled to the rear in complete disorder.

By now it was very late in the day and darkness was coming on. Ferey, in command of the French rearguard, fought magnificently as the 6th Division pressed home its success. Casualties during this phase of the battle were extremely heavy on both sides, but by nightfall the French army, with all semblance of order lost, had dissolved into the forests from which it had deployed the previous noon. Cavalry, infantry, and guns were hopelessly intermingled, and the greater part of the French troops were fleeing in blind panic.

Unfortunately, the British pursuit was far from energetic. Wellington was under the impression that the Spanish garrisons which he had specifically ordered to hold the bridge and ford at Alba de Tormes were still in position, although in actual fact they had been withdrawn. Therefore the British commander was more concerned with pushing the pursuit eastward than in the direction of Alba. From eight o'clock in the evening of 22 July until three on the following morning, the French poured across the bridge and ford at Alba de Tormes, and in this manner the majority of Marmont's army escaped. Yet the French loss at Salamanca was between 14,000 and 15,000, about half of whom were prisoners. This compared to a total Allied loss of 4732.[19]

The French disaster at Salamanca may be attributed as much to psychological as to tactical factors. Marmont's conviction that Wellington would never attack was directly responsible for the hopelessly compromising position which his army had taken up before the blow fell. The results of the victory, too, were as much psychological as military, for Wellington was now recognized as an excellent offensive as well as defensive general. Never again in the Peninsula would French commanders dare to take chances when they were in the field against the British Army. This feeling manifested itself in the British as well as in the French Army, and as there was a lowering of French morale so too in the Allied forces there was an increase of confidence in the ability of the British commander.[20]

On the day after Salamanca, 23 July, Wellington pursued along all the roads which the French had taken, but he pressed most firmly along the road to Garcia Hernandez. Hard by this town the heavy dragoons of the King's German Legion, in pursuit of the fleeing French, performed the almost unprecedented act of riding into and breaking formed squares of infantry. After this reverse the French rearguard, under the command of Foy,[21] accelerated its retreat towards Penaranda.

On 24 July the British pursuit was indubitably slow, nor do Lord Wellington's excuses for this fact appear entirely convincing. In a dispatch written to Lord Bathurst that same night, he said, "How they get on their troops at such a rate, I cannot conceive; but they left this [Flores de Avila] about two in the morning, and they will arrive in Valladolid tomorrow."[22] And the next day Wellington reported to the same correspondent: "I find the troops so much fatigued by the battle and their previous and subsequent marches, and the enemy have got so far before our infantry, that I halted this

day, and have sent on the light cavalry and guerrillas in pursuit."[23] The truth of the matter would seem to be that, just as Wellington never found sieges his strong point, so he had never learned the Napoleonic trick of pressing a pursuit to destruction.

The Liberation of Madrid

On 25 July Wellington heard that King Joseph was on the move from Madrid to reinforce Marmont, but on the same day Joseph received the news of the Battle of Salamanca and immediately began to retire the way he had come. Wellington continued to follow up Clausel for a few days more, although there was now no chance of causing him any severe damage. On the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th of August the British Army halted at Cuellar to gather itself together, and here Wellington made the decision to direct his march upon Madrid, leaving only a small force under Clinton to contain Clausel on the Douro. The reason for this move was not so much the political effect which the capture of the capital would have, great as this would undoubtedly be, but rather that Wellington expected Joseph to unite with Soult's army from Andalusia and with Suchet's from Valencia, so that if the British pursued Clausel to Burgos, this combined French force of over 70,000 men would be able to march on Valladolid to cut off the British from Portugal. This indeed is what Joseph had intended to do, but all the wise plans of that king came to nothing because of the persistent disobedience of Marshal Soult.

With almost incredible effrontery Soult, who was still dreaming of a kingdom of his own in Andalusia, refused to abandon that province. King Joseph therefore had no alternative but to evacuate Madrid in the face of Wellington's advance. Yet to make sure that Wellington was really advancing in force upon the capital, Joseph ordered all his cavalry, some 2000 in number, to drive in the British advanced guard in order to obtain the necessary information. Thus on 11 August at Majadahonda, D'Urban's cavalry of the advanced guard clashed with the reconnaissance in force which Joseph sent out, and the British were badly mauled. As Allied reinforcements came up, however, the French cavalry retired and brought King Joseph the confirmatory information which he required. Joseph with his 14,000 men promptly evacuated Madrid, accompanied by many hundreds of Spanish traitors of both sexes who no longer dared remain in the capital.

On 12 August Wellington entered the city amid scenes of great rejoicing. The British Army stayed encamped in the vicinity until the end of the

month, during which period the troops received a much-needed rest and an attempt was made to reorganize the Spanish armies.

Yet the main reason why Wellington remained inactive during this time was because he was uncertain as to what Soult would do. In actual fact that marshal, at last bowing with a very bad grace to the military realities of the situation, evacuated Seville on the night of 26-27 August. The French garrison was withdrawn from in front of Cadiz, and Drouet's force, which had remained opposite Hill in Estremadura throughout the Salamanca campaign, was ordered back to Cordova where it joined Soult on 30 August.

While these great events were transpiring in central Spain, the rest of the country had not been quiescent. In the south at the beginning of June the Spanish general Ballasteros had been defeated at Bornos and the incompetent General Slade with two regiments of British cavalry had been badly beaten by the French at Maguilla. In mid-July, however, Ballasteros had successfully raided the city of Malaga, and when he left that place he had drawn 11,000 French troops after him and had let them chase him ineffectually for a vital two weeks before he sought shelter opposite Gibraltar. In northern Spain, too, there had been diversions which had substantially helped Wellington. Caffarelli had been prevented from reinforcing Marmont by Admiral Sir Home Popham's combined operations against the Biscay coast, and Popham and the Spanish guerillas had between them captured several fortified coastal towns, while a Spanish force in mid-August had actually occupied Bilbao. This city, however, was retaken by Caffarelli two weeks later. Even the heavy defeat which the Spanish general O'Donnell had suffered at Castalla in July had been of some diversionary help to the Allied cause.

The Burgos Campaign

Between the battle of Salamanca on 22 July and the end of August, Clausel did wonders with the Army of Portugal. After the retreat to Valladolid, the beaten French force had been little more than a disorganized mob. Clausel, however, adopted the sternest measures to restore discipline, and actually shot numerous malefactors; he saw to it that the army had the rest which it so greatly required; and by reorganizing the broken units, he arranged that each battalion had, as far as possible, its proper number of officers. Thus in a surprisingly short time, the Army of Portugal was ready, if not for offensive operations, at least for a large-scale demonstration against Wellington's rear. With commendable boldness Clausel began this

demonstration in mid-August by marching into Valladolid and pushing his cavalry as far as the Douro.

This move brought the expected reaction from Wellington. Rightly believing that the Army of Portugal was not yet in any fit condition to fight a battle, the British commander decided that he would move north to administer a serious check to it before Soult, Joseph, and Suchet could unite their forces in Valencia. Having once either defeated Clausel or pushed him far enough back, Wellington intended to return to Madrid.

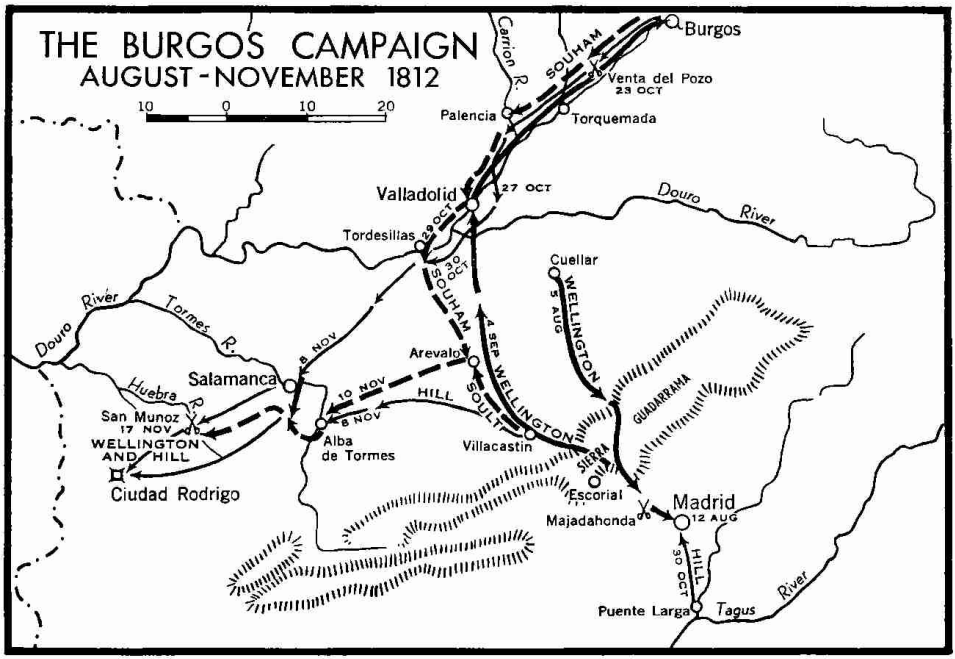
Accordingly, on 31 August Wellington marched out of the capital with 21,000 troops to join Clinton and the 6th Division on the Douro. The junction was effected on 4 September, and two days later the British crossed the river. They found the French drawn up in battle order in front of Valladolid, but when Wellington declined to attack, Clausel withdrew. As the French retired slowly on Burgos, they were as slowly followed up. On 18 September Clausel evacuated Burgos, leaving behind a garrison of 2000 under Dubreton. The next day Wellington halted his advance and invested Burgos Castle.

Although this fortress was not by itself of any exceptional strength, the British commander underestimated the amount of artillery which would be required to reduce it. The only heavy guns with the British Army at Burgos were three iron 18-pounders, and these were short of ammunition. This situation was the more deplorable in view of the abundance of artillery now available in the theatre, but although Wellington could readily have obtained all the guns he needed, he did not send for them in time. Instead, he refused both Admiral Popham's offer to send heavy naval guns from Santander and Edward Pakenham's suggestion that artillery should be dispatched from Madrid. The truth would seem to be that the successes of the year had induced in the commander and in his staff an unwarranted optimism.

On the night 19-20 September Wellington ordered an assault on an outwork of Burgos Castle. The attack was launched without any artillery preparation, but the bright moonlight prevented any possibility of surprise. The French defenders fought with their usual courage and skill, so that, although the outwork finally fell, the attackers lost 421 men in the task.[24] Undeterred by this evidence of French determination, Wellington ordered an escalade to be attempted against the outer wall of the Castle on the night of 23 September. This attack, which was launched with far too few men for any reasonable hope of success, was repulsed with a loss of 158 killed and wounded, and the British Army now began to murmur angrily that it was being asked to attempt the impossible. The Army was undoubtedly right.

For the next few days little was done except to direct a quite ineffectual artillery fire against the Castle. On 29 September a mine, which had been dug with great difficulty, was exploded beneath the wall, but failed to do serious damage. Following the explosion, a half-hearted attempt to storm failed with a loss of only 29 men, a casualty figure which was significantly low. The soldiers who had performed such feats of gallantry at the breaches of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz had no inclination to sacrifice themselves against undamaged walls. After the failure of this attempt, British morale dropped still lower.

Wellington, however, was extremely reluctant to admit himself beaten. He ordered a battery to be constructed for his three heavy guns, but as soon as this work was completed—on 1 October—it was destroyed by French artillery fire, and two of the three guns put out of action before they had fired a shot. The next day the same fate overtook a second battery which had been built during the night. Thereupon, the remaining 18-pounder was moved farther back to a new position from which its fire at last began to have some effect against the Castle. By four o'clock on the afternoon of 4 October a practicable breach, some 60 feet wide, had been made in the outer wall. A second mine was fired and a battalion assault carried the breach. Yet in spite of their best efforts, the British, now between the outer and the inner walls of the Castle, were unable to advance further. Nevertheless the total British loss for the day had been 244 men. A brilliant French sortie the next day was eminently successful, costing the British 142 casualties for a French loss of only 38. Three days later, on 8 October, a second sortie cost the British 184 casualties for a French loss of 33.



The days slipped by without further progress, but Wellington seemed unable to make up his mind either to wait for a proper battering train or to abandon the siege. Instead, on 18 October, he decided to make a last attempt to storm the Castle. This attack, although resolutely pressed, failed with the loss of some 200 men. On 21 October, when he learned that the Army of Portugal was advancing against him in strength, Wellington at last raised the siege.

From the beginning to the end of this ill-conducted affair the British Army had lost 2064 casualties, while of Dubreton's 2000 men 623 men had been put out of action. Thus it is not surprising that the siege of Burgos has been more critically regarded than any other of Wellington's operations. All ranks in the army were agreed that the affair had been badly handled. "I think this was as foolish a piece of work as ever I saw Wellington encounter", wrote an intelligent private in the 42nd Highlanders. "To begin the siege of Burgos without shot and without a battering train . . . you might as well have sent the boys of the grammar school to take the Castle of Edinburgh with pop-guns and tow-balls."[25] Certainly the principal cause of failure was Wellington's underestimation of the task, which can alone account for his refusal to order up heavy artillery. Yet other factors also played their part. The memory of the terrible losses which the British Army

had suffered at Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz were not without effect both upon the troops and the commander. The men felt—and very justly—that they were being asked to face certain death under the walls, while Wellington consistently employed inadequate forces in the assaults, on the strange theory that, "if we fail, we can't lose too many men".[26] There was, in addition, a chronic shortage of engineers and engineering equipment, while not least among the causes of failure must be counted Dubreton's excellent defence.

The British Army had tarried overlong in front of Burgos. By the time the siege was abandoned, the Army of Portugal, now under Souham, had been joined by Caffarelli's Army of the North, making in all a total of some 50,000 men. The strategic situation was now more menacing for the British than at any other time in the Peninsula. Since Wellington had only 24,000 British and Portuguese and 11,000 Spaniards at Burgos, Souham and Caffarelli outnumbered him by 15,000. To make matters worse, Hill in New Castile had been left with only 31,000 Anglo-Portuguese troops and 12,000 Spaniards to oppose the 60,000 men which King Joseph and Soult could raise between them. Moreover, of the total of 78,000 troops which Wellington had under his command, 23,000 were Spaniards and therefore Wellington's control over them was not entirely certain, for although in September the Cortes had at last offered him the position of commander-in-chief of the Allied armies, this appointment had not yet been confirmed by the Prince Regent.

Wellington began his retreat on the night 21-22 October. On 23 October he marched his infantry 26 miles, and during this day the British cavalry in the rearguard were continually harassed by the French horse which outnumbered them three to one. The day's fighting culminated in a fierce cavalry combat near the bridge at Venta del Pozo in which the British were broken and retired in disorder. However, they soon reformed under cover of two infantry squares and were able to retire in much better order than the superior numbers of the enemy should have allowed. The following day Wellington rested his army behind the river line of the Carrion. It was lucky that the French pursuit was slack, for the British troops had got into the wine vats at Torquemada and—as had happened too often before when this army retreated—thousands of the men got too drunk to move.[27]

Wellington's attempt to hold the line of the Carrion failed, and the French captured the town of Palencia. On 25 October Wellington thereupon retreated towards Valladolid, but even this new position became endangered when the French by a brilliant *coup de main* succeeded in capturing a

bridgehead over the Douro at Tordesillas. A few intrepid French soldiers had stripped naked and swum across the icy river to take by storm the fort on the far side of the bridge. This party was soon reinforced, but Wellington merely moved his army south of the Douro and brought up three divisions to contain the Tordesillas bridgehead.

Fortunately, Spanish revolts in Pamplona and Bilbao forced Caffarelli to turn back towards Burgos with his army on 6 November. Since this left Souham with only some 40,000 men against Wellington's 35,000, the French commander decided to make no further offensive move until Joseph's attack should develop in the south.

In this theatre General Hill was also faced with a menacing strategic situation. Originally it had been his intention to defend the line of the Tagus covering Madrid, but the shallowness of the stream and the strength of the French force opposing him caused him to abandon this position on 28 October. The following day he received a disconcerting letter from Wellington which informed him that his chief would be unable to make a prolonged stand on the Douro and directed him to retreat by way of the Escorial and Arevalo.[28] Accordingly Hill began his retirement on the morning of 30 October. His force, like Wellington's, immediately began to lose men through drunkenness, yet by the evening of the same day, Hill had managed to concentrate most of his troops beyond Madrid where they were covered by Skerrett's rearguard which was defending the crossing at Puente Larga. The next day the last of the British moved out of Madrid amid scenes of panic and despair on the part of the people. By 3 November Hill's force was safely over the Guadarrama and on the 4th it reached Villacastin where the junction with Wellington was assured. There had been some straggling on this retreat and some prisoners were taken by the French, but since most of the stragglers were bad characters who had dropped behind for the purpose of plunder, the seriousness of the loss was dubious. The retreat itself was virtually unmolested.

Now on 5 November Wellington was in the enviable position of lying between two enemy armies in such a way that he could strike with a superior force against either of them. It was just this type of situation which Napoleon so dearly loved and which he so frequently turned to brilliant advantage. Moreover, Soult's army, coming up from the south, was strung out along many miles of road, while Souham's army in the north was not only outnumbered but also had not yet completely recovered from its defeat at Salamanca. Wellington, however, with perhaps more caution than the circumstances required, decided against any offensive action. Instead of

attacking, the British Army retreated to its old position around Salamanca which it took up on 8 November.

The French for their part very properly delayed their attack until they could concentrate. When Soult failed in an attempt to force the bridge at Alba de Tormes, the French commanders debated among themselves the relative merits of a frontal attack across the fords or of a flank move which would either force Wellington to fight on new ground or to retire towards Ciudad Rodrigo. King Joseph prudently decided not to attack Wellington frontally in a position of his own choosing, and the turning movement was initiated. This flank march took up 12 and 13 November, but by the morning of the 14th the French Army began to cross the Tormes. By nightfall they were all over the river. Soult on the moving wing advanced his forces with great caution and kept them well closed up so that Wellington had no opportunity of repeating the manœuvre of 22 July. Seeing that he was not going to be given the opportunity of fighting a battle to advantage, the British commander ordered a retreat which began in the mid-afternoon of 15 November in a deluge of rain.

Unfortunately, owing to an error of the Quartermaster-General, Colonel Gordon, the British commissariat retired along a parallel road, twenty miles north of the troops, so the night of the 15th found the British Army without rations. The soldiers were soaked to the skin, tired, hungry, and in that surly mood which retreats almost inevitably produce. For the next few days Wellington's army suffered considerably from wet, cold, and hunger. Most of the men had only a few acorns and some unpalatable bullock meat to eat. Luckily, however, the Army of Portugal and the Royal Guards, about 40,000 men in all, were detained at Salamanca, so that only Soult's army of 50,000 pursued Wellington. Since this was not enough to enable Soult to fight if the British should halt and turn to bay, a skirmish at San Munoz on the Huebra on 17 November ended the pursuit.

An illuminating episode on the retreat occurred two days later, when three divisional generals—probably Sir William Stewart, Lord Dalhousie, and Oswald—decided to disobey Wellington's order of march, and lead their divisions off on a road of their own which they thought would suit them better. Sadly enough, when they reached the bridge at Castillo they found it completely blocked by the Spanish Army of Galicia to whom the road had been assigned. Late in the afternoon Wellington himself rode up to see where his divisional commanders were, and discovered three bedraggled figures huddled together waiting unhappily in the mud for the Spaniards to cross the bridge. Wellington's only comment was: "You see, gentlemen, I

know my own business best." Hours later, after all the Spaniards had passed the defile, the British troops were allowed to cross.

By 20 November the Allied Army was assembled in the vicinity of Ciudad Rodrigo and a week later it was dispersed into winter quarters. The last month had cost Wellington nearly 5000 men, only about 1200 of whom had fallen in action.[29] This loss Wellington unhesitatingly blamed on his subordinates. In his *Memorandum to Officers Commanding Divisions and Brigades*, he wrote: ". . . I am concerned to have to observe that the army under my command has fallen off in the respect of discipline in the late campaign, to a greater degree than any army with which I have ever served, or of which I have ever read. Yet this army has met with no disaster; it has suffered no privations which but trifling attention on the part of the officers could not have prevented, and for which there existed no reason in the nature of the service; nor has it suffered any hardships, excepting those resulting from the necessity of being exposed to the inclemencies of the weather at a moment when they were most severe. It must be obvious to every officer that from the moment the troops commenced their retreat from the neighbourhood of Burgos on the one hand, and from Madrid on the other, the officers lost all command over their men. Irregularities and outrages of all descriptions were committed with impunity, and losses have been sustained which ought never to have occurred. Yet the necessity for retreat existing, none was ever made on which the troops had such short marches; none on which they made such long and repeated halts; and none on which the retreating army was so little pressed on their rear by the enemy. . . I have no hesitation in attributing these evils to the habitual inattention of the Officers of the regiments to their duty, as prescribed by the standing regulations of the Service, and the orders of this army."[30]

These censures, although they obviously contained some truth, seem in the main to have been unjust.[31] A commander who sleeps each night with a roof over his head, who travels everywhere well mounted on horseback, and who eats his own meals regularly, may easily underestimate the hardships which may be suffered by the rank and file. Moreover, the tendency to blame junior regimental officers for mistakes and omissions which are truly the responsibility of their seniors is a device which deceives no one but which is sure to be deeply resented throughout an army.

Yet, although 1812 ended on this unhappy note, the year had, from any point of view, been a momentous one for Europe and for the world. It had seen Napoleon ride to Moscow and return defeated; it had seen Great Britain at war with the United States; and—most important for our present purposes

—it had seen the events in the Peninsula which we have described. Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz, the two great gateways leading from Portugal into Spain, had been wrested from French hands. These victories, however, had been purchased at an appallingly high price, and in the case of Badajoz at least, with dishonour. At Salamanca a great victory had been won, but even here the full fruits of success had not been harvested because of the failure of the pursuit. Nevertheless, these three actions were to mark the high tide of British arms in the Napoleonic Wars, saving only Waterloo. The year had ended ambiguously with the raising of the siege of Burgos and the long retreat to the Portuguese frontier, and although large areas of Spain had indeed been liberated—some of them permanently—at year's end there was still no guarantee of permanence.

Still, in the long view, the balance was definitely in favour of the Allies, and it is of no avail to weigh positive accomplishment against what might have been. If the British troops had not sacked Badajoz, if after Salamanca the pursuit had been pressed more vigorously, if the siege of Burgos had been conducted otherwise, if in November Wellington had attacked either Soult or Souham instead of retreating—these are speculations which can bring only very dubious enlightenment. And if everywhere the Allies had suffered grievous losses, the French had fared still more badly. In St. Petersburg, Baron Stein, hearing the news of the burning of Moscow, had said: "Never mind. Often times ere this I have had to abandon my luggage". At his headquarters at Freineda, Wellington, in a more practical vein, had berated the army which had served him so well. Yet 1812 was, in fact, the tragic climax of the Napoleonic epic. From now on the tide of French success flowed steadily back, and the star of Napoleon, which had been so long ascendant, began to decline. Ahead there still lay Vitoria and Leipzig and Waterloo, but these were in truth merely great anti-climaxes. The end of the affair had been decided in 1812 in Russia and in Spain.

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[1] *Dispatches*, VIII, 524.

[2] William Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers, 1809 to 1814*, edited by Charles Oman (London, 1902), 141.

[3] Oman, V, 186.

[4] One eyewitness, Sir Harry Smith (*Autobiography of Sir Harry Smith* (London, 1901), I, 64), speaks of the attack being made on a beautiful moonlight night, but none of the other authorities agrees with him on this. Certainly the guides of the 5th Division went astray, and Grattan speaks of the 3rd Division's attack being made in darkness until the French set alight a great mass of combustible material on the walls. Captain McCarthy of the 50th Regiment, who was acting as a guide, tells of how General Picton almost cut him down with his sword when he believed for a time that the Division had lost its way. (Quoted in Wrottesley, I, 179).

[5] Oman, V, 250.

[6] Quoted in Oman, V, 255. This letter, which was lost for many years and so was not printed in the ninth volume of the *Dispatches*, was found among Lord Liverpool's papers in 1869.

[7] Grattan, Editor's note, 217.

[8] Kincaid, 39.

[9] *Supplementary Dispatches*, VII, 311.

[10] Smith, I, 68-72; Kincaid, *Random Shots from a Rifleman* (London), 292-296. A lively and interesting account in fictional form of Juana's adventures with the British Army is to be found in Georgette Heyer's book, *The Spanish Bride*.

[11] Godfrey Davies, *Wellington and His Army* (Oxford, 1954), 51, 63.

[12] *Mémoires militaires du Maréchal Jourdan*, 392-393.

[13] *Supplementary Dispatches*, VII, 318-19.

[14] *Dispatches*, IX, 319.

[15] *Ibid.*, 299-300.

[16] *Ibid.*, 310.

[17] Oman, V, 445.

[18] Le Marchant, who was mortally wounded in this action, is also remembered as the founder and administrator of the Royal Military College at High Wycombe, an institution which was already beginning to send well-trained young officers out to the Peninsula.

[19] Oman, V, 469-470.

[20] The foregoing account of the battle of Salamanca has been drawn from the following sources: *Dispatches*, IX, 299-309; Oman, V, 418-474; Fortescue, VIII, 475-498; Napier, V, 156, 181.

[21] Of the eight divisional commanders at Salamanca, Ferey and Thomières had been killed, and Marmont, Clausel and Bonnet wounded.

[22] *Dispatches*, IX, 309.

[23] *Ibid.*, 312.

[24] Oman, VI, 30.

[25] *The Personal Narrative of a Private Soldier in the 42nd Highlanders* (London, 1821), 146, 154-55.

[26] Wrottesley, Lt.-Col. the Hon. George, *Life and Correspondence Field Marshal Sir John Burgoyne, Bart.* (London, 1873), 236.

[27] Napier, IV, 361.

[28] *Dispatches*, IX, 518.

[29] Oman, VI, 153-4.

[30] *Dispatches*, IX, 582, 583.

[31] Oman, VI, 158-161.

Chapter VIII

The Vitoria Campaign

Operations during the Winter and Spring of 1813

During the winter of 1812-13, Wellington at his headquarters in Freineda was troubled with a variety of problems which, although not directly military in nature, nevertheless could not be neglected. He was forced to concern himself with worrisome intrigues in the Spanish and Portuguese Governments; he was asked to advise on unwise schemes for the invasion of Holland and Italy; and he had to dissuade the British Cabinet from the idea that part of his army should be withdrawn to serve in Germany.

With all these affairs Wellington was able to deal adequately, but on one important matter he had far less success. Perhaps the most irritating of all the detractions which plagued him during this winter was the persistent refusal of the House Guards either to send him the officers he asked for or to refrain from sending him officers he did not want. The Duke of York, who was commander-in-chief, adamantly refused to co-operate with Wellington in this regard. Probably his Royal Highness had never forgiven Wellington for his remark that he had learned more of his profession by seeing the faults and defects of the Army in Holland in 1794, when the Duke of York was in command, than anywhere else.[1] The commander-in-chief's military secretary, Henry Torrens, an intelligent and reasonable man, did his best for Wellington, but all too frequently to no avail.

During this period Wellington asked for the removal of five of his seven cavalry generals and ten of his infantry brigade commanders. He further requested that no new general officers should be sent to the Peninsula from England. The reason for this was that he was anxious to promote the deserving and experienced colonels who had served with him for years. Yet although about half of the requested removals eventually took place (even the Horse Guards could scarcely have done less, considering the grounds for most of the requests), new generals continued to arrive.

A further point of conflict between Wellington and the Horse Guards concerned the appointment of a second-in-command in the Peninsula. Wellington was opposed to the whole idea of having a second-in-command, but a compromise was finally reached whereby Marshal Beresford was nominated as Wellington's successor in case of need. After Beresford's

indecisions and errors in the campaign of 1811, this seems a somewhat strange choice, but Wellington, who had no intention of becoming incapacitated and who was of too autocratic a temper to tolerate any division of responsibility, doubtless felt that Beresford, as commander-in-chief of the Portuguese Army, would be happily out of the way and unable to make a nuisance of himself in the field.

On 10 March, 1813, Wellington received his first definite intelligence that French troops were leaving Spain. He had been expecting this withdrawal, for the French disaster in Russia in 1812 would obviously force Napoleon to muster all the men he could for the impending campaign in Germany. Indeed if communications with Paris had been reasonably adequate, the withdrawal from Spain would have taken place much earlier. As it was, Napoleon's demand for reinforcements did not reach King Joseph until February, and even the Emperor's famous 29th Bulletin of 3 December, containing an expurgated account of the death of the Grand Army on the road back from Moscow, did not arrive at Madrid until 6 January, 1813. When Napoleon's directives were finally delivered, they ordered Soult and Caffarelli back to France, directed Joseph to abandon Madrid and establish his headquarters at Valladolid, and recalled the Army of the Centre to the line of the Douro.

Throughout February and March the whole of northern Spain seethed with insurrection, as the Spanish guerrillas redoubled their activity. Longa operated between Burgos and the sea; Porlier was active in the Asturias; El Pastor fought in Biscay; and Mina harried the French in Navarre. Even the energetic Clausel, who replaced Caffarelli in command of the Army of the North, completely failed to suppress the irregulars. Mina, with two heavy guns to aid him, besieged the town of Tafalla and took the place on 11 February, after having defeated a relieving force from Pamplona under General Abbé. With this, all the rural areas of Navarre came under Mina's control, a circumstance which was confirmed in March when Mina again defeated the French at Lerin. The only French success during this period was Foy's capture of Castro Urdiales in Biscay at the end of April.

Meanwhile, the Anglo-Sicilian force stationed around Alicante now came under the incompetent command of Sir John Murray. Murray had some 14,000 troops of his own, and when his Spanish auxiliaries were taken into account, his army numbered rather more than 21,000. They were, however, a motley collection of foreigners, adventurers, and deserters from the French, while their commander was utterly incapable. Although at Castalla on 13 April Sir John with 18,000 troops contrived to withstand an

attack from Suchet, no advantage was taken of this moderate success. In June Murray besieged Tarragona, but abandoned the project in so disgraceful a manner that he was brought to a court-martial. All things considered, Wellington was far from getting the help from this force which he had a right to expect.

The Manœuvres in May and June 1813

Wellington, with his usual intellectual integrity, had been quick to recognize the errors of the Burgos campaign and was at pains to rectify them the following spring. This time, before he moved, he was careful to collect an adequate siege train, and when he again took the offensive he kept his army concentrated. Above all he did not repeat the mistake of underestimating his opponent.

In a letter to Lord Bathurst, dated 11 May, Wellington outlined his initial plan of campaign: "I propose on this side to commence our operations by turning the enemy's position on the Douro, by passing the left of our army over that river within the Portuguese frontier. I should cross the right in the same manner only that I have been obliged to throw the right very forward during the winter, in order to cover and connect our cantonments; and I could not well draw them back for this movement without exposing a good deal of country and incurring the risk of a counter-movement on the part of the enemy. I therefore propose to strengthen our right and to move with it myself across the Tormes, and establish a bridge on the Douro below Zamora. The two wings of the army will thus be connected and the enemy's position on the Douro will be turned."[2]

Except for the fact that this movement began a little later than Wellington had anticipated, it was carried out exactly as planned. The future course of operations would, of course, be dependent upon the movements of the French, but it seems probable that even at this stage Wellington had already envisaged a campaign which would take him to the Pyrenees and drive the French completely out of Spain.

When the British Army moved, Graham with six of the eight veteran divisions, totalling some 42,000 men, marched on the northern or left wing and reached Braganza and Miranda by 24 May. Hill, on the southern flank, advanced with three divisions by way of Salamanca. Although this force numbered 30,000, it contained only five British brigades, but it was exceptionally strong in cavalry, since Wellington intended by means of a dense cavalry screen to prevent the French from learning that this was not

the main body of his army. To foster the belief that his real attack was coming in the south, Wellington himself accompanied Hill.

On 26 May Hill drove the French out of Salamanca and the following day the British crossed the Tormes. Hill now halted for six days, both to allow Graham to complete his wide turning movement and also to deceive Joseph and Jourdan into believing that this area was to be the main theatre of war. Now, however, Wellington travelled swiftly north to join Graham. The British commander rode at his usual break-neck speed and, although the way led through some difficult country, covered over fifty miles of this journey on the first day.[3] On 3 June Graham and Hill joined forces on the Douro and contact was made with the Spanish Army of Galicia and with Penne Villemur's force, so that Wellington now had 80,000 troops at his disposal.

When the British had thus turned the French right, King Joseph's position became dangerous in the extreme. Since all the infantry of Clausel's Army of Portugal had been lent to the Army of the North to hunt guerrillas in Biscay, Navarre, and Aragon, the remainder of the French Army, quartered about Valladolid between 25 and 29 May, amounted to no more than 50,000 troops. Because of this numerical weakness, King Joseph did not feel strong enough to stand on the defensive, so on the evening of 2 June he began to retire on Burgos. So far Wellington's northern flanking movement had forced the French to abandon New Castile, Leon, and part of Old Castile.

Wellington's movements against Joseph now were in interesting contrast to his pursuit of Clausel the previous year. In 1812 the pursuit had been a simple stern chase, but now the British commander sent only some cavalry to harass Joseph's rearguard, while the great bulk of his army moved in four parallel columns along secondary roads to the north-west. Wellington drove his army hard; the marches were long; and the commissariat mule train often had difficulty in keeping up with the infantry. Yet, although biscuit was sometimes scarce, the troops seem to have received their meat ration regularly.

The advantages gained by this wide flanking manœuvre were, first, that the whole series of defensive positions which the French might have taken up were turned without a fight; secondly, Burgos had to be evacuated; and finally, the main French artery of communications, the great highway running from Burgos to Bayonne, was eventually to be cut in such a manner that the French would be driven away from it and henceforth forced to supply themselves by inadequate secondary roads. Wellington's long march to the north-west took the French completely by surprise, for they believed

that the British Army's mobility would still be limited by the necessity of maintaining its long lines of communication overland to Lisbon. This calculation was now vitiated by Wellington's exploitation of the flexibility which can be conferred by sea-power. The British commander resolved on the bold step of transferring his Army's main base from Portugal to Santander on the Bay of Biscay. From now until the end of the war the Biscay ports were to supply the British Army and the long overland journeys of cumbersome supply trains were to be largely things of the past.

Meanwhile at Burgos, King Joseph received the bad news that the town was no longer defensible and that there were not enough provisions there to feed his army for more than a few days. At long last, on 9 June, King Joseph, deciding to brave his brother's wrath, sent Clausel direct orders to rejoin him. It is a sufficient comment on the efficiency of the Spanish guerrillas that the aide-de-camp who carried this message was provided with an escort of 1500 cavalry. On 10 June, when Wellington had pushed his army far enough north to turn the French flank, he directed his march due east. Two days later King Joseph reluctantly decided to abandon Burgos and retire to the Ebro. On the morning of 13 June the retreating French blew up Burgos Castle, but since by some mischance the charge was touched off too soon, the explosion resulted in numerous casualties among themselves and the civilian inhabitants. When he heard that Burgos had been evacuated, Wellington again directed his army north-west along rough mountain paths in order to turn the line of the Ebro, get around the French flank, and, by concentrating on Vitoria, cut the enemy's lifeline to Bayonne. By 14 June, the head of the British Army was across the upper reaches of the Ebro.

Much later, when his memory of details had perhaps become somewhat blurred, Wellington explained the reasons which underlay his strategy at this time.

> When I heard and saw this explosion (for I was within a few miles and the effect was tremendous) I made a sudden resolution forthwith—*instanter* to cross the Ebro and endeavour to push the French to the Pyrenees. We had heard of the Battles of Lützen and Bautzen and of the armistice, and the affairs of the allies looked very ill. Some of my officers . . . remonstrated with me about the imprudence of crossing the Ebro, and advised me to 'take up the line of the Ebro etc.'. I asked them what was meant by 'taking up the line of the Ebro', a river 300 miles long, and what good I was to do along that line? In short, I would not listen to the advice, and that evening (or the very next morning) I crossed the river and

pushed the French till I afterwards beat them at Vitoria. And lucky it was that I did so, for the battle of Vitoria induced the Allies to denounce the armistice, and then followed Leipzig and all the rest.

All my staff were against my crossing the Ebro: they represented that we had done enough, that we ought not to risk the army and what we had obtained, and that this armistice would enable Buonaparte to reinforce his army in Spain, and we therefore should look to a defensive system. I thought differently. I knew that an armistice could not affect in the way of reinforcements so distant an army as that of Spain. I thought that if I could not *hustle* them out of Spain before they were reinforced, I should not be able to hold any position in Spain when they should be, and above all, I calculated on the effect that a victory might have on the armistice itself. So I crossed the Ebro and fought the battle of Vitoria.[4]

If it were not that this statement so clearly explains that the aim of driving the French completely out of Spain now motivated the British commander's strategy, it would be rather cruel to quote it, for it contains overtones which all too plainly reveal the limitations of the later Wellington. At the time of his decision to move upon Vitoria, Wellington had not in fact heard of the Armistice. Yet in spite of the hindsight, the schoolboy Latin, the denigration of his staff, and the exaggeration of the importance of the Spanish theatre, in essence what Wellington said was true. When by nightfall of 16 June the whole of the British Army was over the Ebro, the French had either to fight against heavy odds or retire out of the Peninsula altogether.

Joseph's retreat up the highroad towards Bayonne was a slow affair. The French were not pressed as they retired, fortunately for them since there were heavy convoys of loot, refugees, dependents, and camp-followers ahead of the French force. Moreover Joseph was in no hurry, since he still hoped that the additional time would enable Clausel to rejoin him. This hope proved to be false, but by the time Joseph reached Vitoria he had been joined by Sarrut's and Lamartinière's divisions, giving him a total force of about 60,000 men. Nevertheless the absence of pursuit left the French disturbed and uneasy, even although they were inclined to believe that Wellington might have been forced to halt at Burgos because of lack of supplies.

On 15 June Wellington again turned east. Three days later Maucune was defeated in a sharp little combat at San Millan, and Joseph, having decided

that there was no position where he could make a stand before Vitoria, retreated to that city, arriving there on 19 June.

The Battle of Vitoria

The little walled city of Vitoria lies among the northern mountains in a small rolling plain some twelve miles by eight miles in extent. Except for the principal route through Vitoria, the highroad from Bayonne to Burgos which runs in a generally north-east—south-west direction, the only other major road from the city is that which runs eastward to Pamplona. Apart from these two roads, access to this plain is only to be had by way of narrow passes or difficult mountain defiles. To the north, intersecting the plain on a course roughly parallel to the Bayonne highway, the Zadorra River flows generally south-westerly to re-enter the mountains just west of the heights of Puebla.

For reasons best know to himself, King Joseph drew up his line of battle behind the Zadorra River, facing south-west astride the highroad. This position extended for about three miles between the heights to the south and the river to the north and was of considerable strength against any enemy obliging enough to direct his attack along the axis of the highroad. Yet although this line had less obvious advantages in the event of an attack developing from some other direction, the King was so completely satisfied with his dispositions and so confident of success that he felt himself able at dawn of 21 June to send off the whole of Maucune's division as a guard for the great convoy of refugees and looted treasure which he was careful to dispatch to France.

The defensive, however, is only the stronger form of war when other things are equal, and Wellington's numerical superiority enabled him to attack Joseph's line not only frontally but also on each flank. At the same time the British commander planned to send a considerable force far to Joseph's rear to act as the anvil against which the French Army would be broken once it had been forced out of its original position by the other attacks. In the direct assault against Joseph's position, General Hill, with 20,000 troops, was to operate on the right flank where, by capturing the heights of Puebla, he was to turn the French left. In the centre the attack across the bridges and fords of the Zadorra was to be launched by the 4th and Light Divisions plus three cavalry brigades and D'Urban's Portuguese horse. The 3rd and 7th Divisions were to assault the French right. Meanwhile, General Graham with the 1st and 5th Divisions and auxiliary troops, totalling in all some 20,000 men, was to descend upon the French

rear from the north, cut the road to Bayonne, and complete the destruction of the French Army. Depending heavily upon this leftward manœuvre, Wellington's plan for the battle was the tactical counterpart of the strategy he had pursued from the beginning of the campaign.

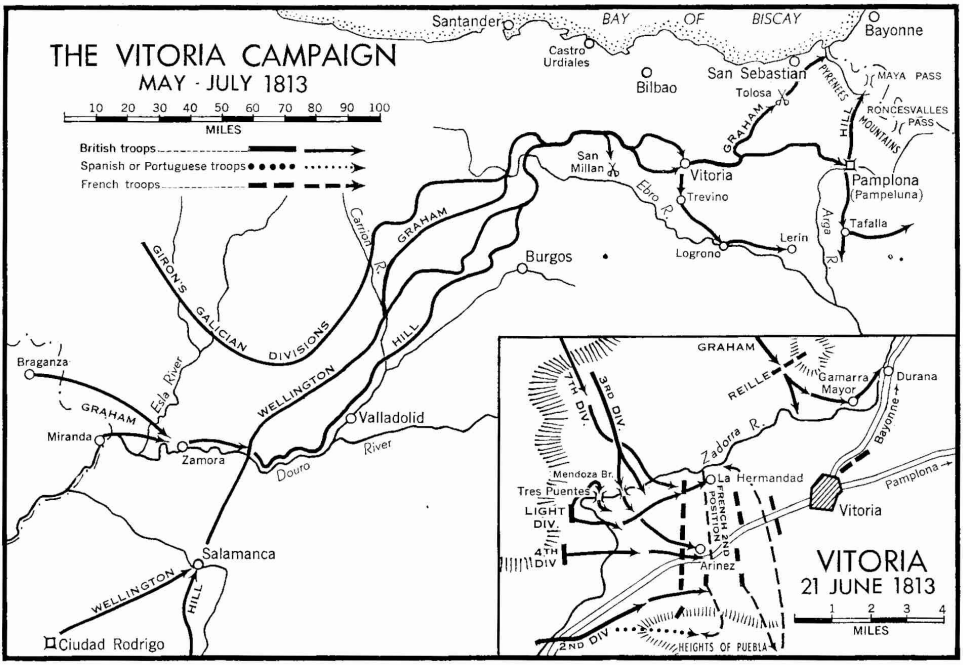
On the 20th Wellington, as was his invariable custom, made a personal reconnaissance of all four routes by which the attacks were to be launched. The British troops for their part spent this day preparing for the coming battle. Little was done on the French side except that Joseph moved Reille with a flank guard back and to the right to protect the northern approaches to the position.

When dawn broke at four o'clock in the morning of 21 June it brought a beautiful, bright day, so clear that movements could be detected many miles away. Because the British Army had to advance over difficult roads to reach the positions from which they might attack, the actual fighting did not begin until eight o'clock. Then firing broke out on the extreme British right as Spanish troops, later assisted by some British, moved forward and began to clear the crest of the Puebla heights. Marshal Jourdan, seeing that this movement threatened to turn his left, and believing that the main enemy attack was being launched here, began to reinforce this wing with troops drawn from the centre. Some two hours later, but before the British attack on the centre had really developed, a Spanish peasant came to Wellington with the incredible news that the bridge across the Zadorra at Tres Puentes was intact and unguarded. When this was confirmed, Kempt's brigade of the Light Division got across unhindered and established a lodgement in the heart of the enemy position.

Further to the British left, however, things were going more slowly. By culpable mismanagement Lord Dalhousie, who was in command here, still had only one brigade of the 7th Division in position to attack, and he showed extreme reluctance to commit even this. Fortunately, General Picton with his 3rd Division was also in this area and was fretting at his inactivity. The blunt old man, his eyes inflamed by an infection, and wearing, in flagrant disregard of dress regulations, an ancient civilian top hat, sat fuming in the saddle waiting for orders to advance. When an aide-de-camp told him that the only orders for this sector were for the 4th and Light Divisions to support Lord Dalhousie's attack on the Mendoza bridge as soon as his Lordship was ready, Picton flew into a rage and declared: "You may tell Lord Wellington for me, sir, that the 3rd Division under my command shall in less than ten minutes attack that bridge and carry it. And the 4th and Light may support if they choose."[5] The fiery old veteran was as good as his

word. The 3rd Division's attack carried the Mendoza bridge and the nearby ford without serious difficulty, so that by two-thirty in the afternoon the British were across the river in force.

Meanwhile, Graham's flanking force had pushed down to take the hamlet of Gamarra Mayor and had pressed in so close to the village of Durana that the Bayonne highway was effectively cut. Picton also continued to advance and succeeded in capturing the hamlet of Arinez in the centre. Now that Jourdan saw his left heavily engaged on the Puebla heights and large numbers of British across the Zadorra River in his centre, he ordered a general retirement and attempted to form a new battle line one mile further back. On the British left Lord Dalhousie had advanced slowly with the one brigade of the 7th Division, but he was still hesitant about attacking when the matter was highhandedly taken out of his control by a young brigade major from the Light Division. Sir Harry Smith tells the story in his autobiography: "My brigade . . . was sent to support the 7th Division which was very hotly engaged. I was sent forward to report myself to Lord Dalhousie who commanded. I found his Lordship and his QMG, Drake, an old Rifle comrade, in deep conversation. I reported pretty quick and asked for orders (the head of my brigade was just coming under fire). I repeated the question 'What orders, my Lord?' Drake became somewhat animated and I heard his Lordship say 'Better take the village' . . . I roared out 'Certainly, my Lord' and off I galloped. Both called to me to come back but as none are so deaf as those who won't hear I told General Vandeleur we were immediately to take the village."[6] On this, Vandeleur's brigade attacked and pushed the French out of the hamlet of La Hermandad.



Thus by four o'clock in the afternoon Wellington had readjusted his line and was renewing the pressure on the French right and centre. Unfortunately, Graham's attack on the enemy's rear was not being pressed with any determination, but in spite of this, the French, who never really had an opportunity properly to settle into their new battle line, began rapidly to give way. Thereupon King Joseph belatedly ordered a retreat along the only road which still remained open to him, the one leading east to Pamplona.

The retirement had been left far too late, and it was by now quite impossible for the French to break off the engagement cleanly. Within minutes the Pamplona road was jammed with refugees, carriages, fleeing women and children, and carts loaded with booty. The bitter comment of a captured French officer summed up the situation adequately: "It is no wonder you won", he said, "for you have an army, while we are nothing but a travelling brothel."[7] Looting began at once, first by the fleeing French and then by the pursuing British. A large part of the open plain immediately to the east of Vitoria was covered with broken and overturned carriages, and an incredible amount of plunder was spread about the fields for whomsoever chose to take it. Indeed the French military chests containing much gold and silver coin were so effectively looted that Wellington succeeded in retrieving only about one-twentieth of the money which should have fallen into his

hands. Jewels, paintings, church plate, tapestry work and treasure of all kinds was scattered about in the chaos and picked up by the members of the victorious army.

Since any orderly retreat through the mass of fugitives was out of the question, the French could not have escaped complete destruction if they had been pressed as they ought to have been. Yet in spite of the rather farcical ending to the battle, Reille's force, which managed to get off in relatively good order, was able to act as rearguard for the remainder of the fleeing mob. This role was performed so effectively that, although 151 French guns were captured, only 2000 prisoners fell into Wellington's hands. Without detracting from the credit which very properly belongs to Reille, this failure to exploit the victory was very largely due to the fact that the British cavalry made no real effort to pursue. Thus the French loss at Vitoria amounted to only 8091 as opposed to an Allied loss of 5158.[8]

Therefore, great as the victory was, Vitoria was nevertheless something of a disappointment. All the bloody fighting which still lay ahead in the passes of the Pyrenees could have been avoided if King Joseph's army had been destroyed instead of merely dispersed. Perhaps the blame for this comparative failure cannot be definitely assigned, but among the reasons why the battle was not as decisive as it should have been was the fact that the attacking troops had to advance by difficult routes and so could not properly co-ordinate their assaults; that Graham did not press sufficiently energetically on the French rear; that the inept Lord Dalhousie rather than the veteran Picton commanded in the centre; that the British cavalry, not for the first time, made no effective pursuit; and that the British infantry, who even by themselves might have done much more execution on the fleeing French, preferred to turn aside in quest of loot.[9]

The French Army retreated until it was exhausted, and even by the next day only Reille's rearguard had any semblance of order. Yet although seven out of the nine British cavalry brigades were completely intact, Wellington did not press forward strongly against Joseph. Instead the 5th Division and R. Hill's cavalry brigade were left to guard Vitoria from a possible raid by Clausel who was then at Trevino, while Wellington turned with the rest of his army to commence a series of intricate manœuvres which were not destined to be completed until the end of the first week of July.

Between 26 and 29 June, Wellington pursued Clausel, but that general made good his escape to Saragossa. At the same time General Graham chased Foy, fought a small action at Tolosa on 26 June, and forced Foy's

army to retreat to the Bidasoa. When Hill defeated Gazan at the Maya pass on 7 July, this French force also retired out of Spain. Thus by the beginning of July the French occupation of the Peninsula was virtually at an end, and Wellington had brought his army up to the Bidasoa and the Pyrenean passes.

Although an invasion of France itself would now have been possible, Wellington decided against it because of the uncertainty of the general political situation. On the eastern frontiers of France, Napoleon had been winning a series of brilliant victories, and there was as yet no certainty that he would not once more be able to make a separate peace with his enemies and then turn with all his force against the army which had driven his brother out of Spain. If this were to happen, the line of the Pyrenees would be the only feasible one for Wellington to hold. Accordingly he preferred to remain where he was and lay siege to San Sebastian and blockade Pamplona rather than venture into France.

Napoleon was furious when he heard of the French disaster at Vitoria. He deposed King Joseph, sent him back to France under arrest and—bitterest insult of all—appointed Soult commander-in-chief of the beaten army. While that marshal was doing a very creditable job of reorganizing his forces, General Graham began the siege of San Sebastian. The heavy siege train arrived in front of the fortress on 7 July and ten days later the Monastery of San Bartolomé, an important outwork of San Sebastian, was stormed. The final assault on the fortress itself was launched on 25 July, but, as generally happened with British sieges in this war, was badly mismanaged. The attacking troops were forced to advance on a narrow front over extremely difficult ground and under the fire of well-garrisoned flanking defences. As a consequence, the breaches were never seriously threatened and the attack failed with heavy loss. On 26 July the siege was raised, having cost the British 571 casualties.[10] Before Wellington could attempt any further offensive move, Soult took the initiative out of his hands by himself attacking in the direction of Pamplona through the two passes of Roncesvalles and Maya.

[1] Godfrey Davies, *op. cit.*, 43. The Horse Guards' remarkable disregard of Wellington's wishes had, perhaps, been most clearly shown when it had proposed that Lord Paget should return to the Peninsula as Wellington's cavalry commander. Lord Paget, only a short time before, had run off with the wife of Henry Wellesley, Wellington's younger brother. Apparently this appointment was not made only because Paget himself had the delicacy to decline it. By 1815 these sentiments were no longer so strong, and Paget (now Earl of Uxbridge) was appointed Wellington's second-in-command in spite of Wellington's protests.

[2] *Dispatches*, X, 372.

[3] Wellington was a bold horseman who normally kept a stud of eight good hunters in Spain in addition to his favourite charger, Copenhagen.

[4] *The Croker Papers*, ed. L. J. Jennings (New York, 1884), II, 309; I, 335-6.

[5] H. B. Robinson, *Memoirs of Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Picton* (London, 1836), II, 195-6.

[6] Smith, *op. cit.*, I, 197.

[7] Earl Stanhope, *Notes of Conversations with the Duke of Wellington 1831-1851* (London, 1888), 144.

[8] Oman, VI, 445-6.

[9] The foregoing account of the battle of Vitoria has been drawn from the following principal sources: *Dispatches*, X, 446-453; Oman, VI, 384-450; Fortescue IX 162-192; Napier, V, 548-566.

[10] Oman, VI, 582.

Chapter IX

The End of the War

The Battles of the Pyrenees

When Soult assumed command from Joseph on 12 July, he at once set about reorganizing the old armies of Spain in accordance with the Emperor's directives. Three new formations, which were in effect army corps, now emerged. One, under Reille, took up position on the French right; D'Erlon commanded in the centre; while the left was under Villatte. Each of these formations contained about 17,000 men, except D'Erlon's which had 21,000. There were, in addition, some 7000 cavalry with the field army.

Soult's plan was an ambitious one, for he intended to leave a corps of observation on the Bidasoa to contain Graham and then to converge on Pamplona through the two principal passes of the Pyrenees. Reille and Clausel were to advance by Roncesvalles, while D'Erlon marched by Maya. Soult calculated that the better roads on the French side of the mountains would enable him to build up a heavy numerical superiority on his left wing during the first two or three days, while if D'Erlon succeeded in pushing far enough south he would be able to cut Wellington's lateral communications so that the British commander would not be able to move his northern divisions south to Pamplona except by very roundabout routes.

On the night 19-20 July Villatte's troops relieved Reille on the lower Bidasoa, but because the roads were worse than had been anticipated, the force which was to attack through the Roncesvalles gap was not assembled before 24 July. Although Wellington was aware of the increased French strength on his right, he believed that Soult would attempt the relief of San Sebastian, and he therefore regarded the French moves on Roncesvalles as a feint. When on the morning of 25 July Wellington heard the news of the failure of the British assault on San Sebastian, he rode over to visit Graham. On his way back that evening he was met by a messenger from his chief of staff, Murray,[1] who told him that all afternoon there had been the sound of heavy fighting coming from the direction of the Maya Pass. When an hour later Wellington reached his headquarters at Lesaca, he learned that the French had also been attacking at Roncesvalles in great strength. Later that night a messenger from General Stewart reported that the British had lost the Maya Pass. Thus although the fight at Maya had begun at eleven o'clock in

the morning, Wellington's headquarters, only twenty miles away, was not informed of the progress of the operation until ten o'clock in the evening.

What had actually happened was this. On the morning of 25 July the French launched their attack at Roncesvalles, with Clausel advancing on the left and Reille on the right. Because of the narrow, difficult roads, the French had great difficulty in deploying, so their attacks had considerable depth but were necessarily on a narrow front. Indeed, the fronts of the French columns were actually engaged before the rear units began to march. Clausel's 17,000 troops attacked 6000 British and Spaniards under Byng and Morillo, but the defensive positions were very strong and, although the fighting lasted for eleven hours, the attack made no appreciable headway. At five o'clock in the afternoon a sudden mountain mist descended, darkening the twilight into an early night and making further movement impossible. On the British left Reille had even less success with his attacks against Ross. The fighting here was costly for both sides, but the British maintained their positions intact.

Now on the previous day Wellington had ordered Cole, who was in overall command in this sector, to "maintain the passes in front of Roncesvalles to the utmost". Nevertheless on the night of 25 July both Byng on the British right and Cole himself decided to retire from their positions for fear of being cut off by a turning movement around their right flank. Not only was this in direct disobedience of Wellington's orders, but it would appear that Cole's pessimism was entirely unjustified. In reporting the action to Lord Liverpool, Wellington wrote: "Sir Lowry Cole, whose retreat occasioned the retreat of the whole, retired, not because he could not hold his position, but because his right flank was turned. It is a great disadvantage when the Officer Commanding-in-Chief must be absent, and probably at a distance. For this reason there is nothing that I dislike so much as these extended operations, which I cannot direct myself."[2]

While these happenings were taking place at Roncesvalles, the British were faring rather worse at Maya. Here Hill was in overall command, with Stewart on the left with the 2nd Division less Byng's brigade, and Silveira's Portuguese on the right. Unfortunately when the French attack came, Hill was with the Portuguese. What was even worse was that Sir William Stewart, hearing the sound of firing on his right, rode off to the east early in the morning of 25 July, quite inexcusably leaving his own division without knowledge of his whereabouts. Accordingly, when the 2nd Division became engaged, the command developed on General W. Pringle, who had only arrived from England two days before and who had no authority to alter Sir

William's quite inadequate dispositions. A considerable amount of dead ground to the British front had been left unobserved, nor were all the avenues of approach properly guarded. Thus D'Erlon, taking advantage of the dead ground to advance his troops close to the British position, was able to achieve surprise. A period of very desperate and bloody fighting followed in which the British were heavily outnumbered. To make matters worse the British reinforcements were committed piecemeal, so that when Sir William Stewart belatedly returned to assume his command at two o'clock in the afternoon, he found that it was no longer possible to hold the Maya Pass. Not even a brilliant counter-attack with fresh German troops under Barnes was able to retrieve the situation. When Hill arrived late in the day, he had already heard of Cole's retirement and he therefore ordered his force to withdraw across the upper Bidasoa.

When Wellington visited Hill the next day he ordered him to stand where he was, and late on the same day the British commander was at last informed of the developments on the Pamplona front. Strangely enough, General Picton, who had superseded Cole on 26 July, for once had failed to display his habitual aggressiveness. He had in fact retired without fighting to a defensive position between the Ulzama and Arga rivers north of Pamplona.

When on the morning of 27 July Wellington arrived at the Pamplona position, the soldiers were much relieved to see him and broke into a great shout of spontaneous cheering.[3] Wellington may not have been popular with the Army, and certainly his shyness no less than his feeling of intellectual superiority made it impossible for him to seek popularity, but whenever there was hard fighting in the offing the Army was wholeheartedly glad to see him. As Kincaid truly remarked: ". . . we would rather see his long nose in the fight than a reinforcement of ten thousand men any day."[4]

That day at noon Clausel urged Soult to attack, but the marshal was in no hurry. After he had spread out his maps and eaten his lunch, he calmly went to sleep while the rest of his troops came up. Thus although the French demonstrated late in the afternoon to determine the extent of the British position, there was no fighting on the 27th. That night, as on the eve of Salamanca, there was a wild thunderstorm which swept down from the mountains bringing an early night. (When the same phenomenon occurred on the night before Waterloo many in the British Army viewed the circumstance with superstitious awe.) Meanwhile, Wellington had sent orders for Hill, Dalhousie, and Pack with the 6th Division to concentrate at Ollocarizqueta. By ten o'clock the next morning the 6th Division was at

Ollocarizqueta and from there moved up to prolong the British left, but Hill and Dalhousie, detained in the mountains by the thunderstorm of the 27th, did not arrive in time and took no part in the subsequent fighting.

The French assault developed at twelve-thirty the next afternoon when Conroux's division pushed down the valley of the Ulzama. These troops ran into a converging fire from three sides and were forced back as far as Sorauren village. Then 15,000 French infantry attacked along the full extent of the British line and established themselves on a considerable portion of the crest. This success, however, was nullified when Maucune's three battalions on the French left were repulsed with terrible loss, suffering over 600 casualties out of the 2200 attackers. Seeing this French reverse, Wellington thereupon ordered a counter-attack down the hill, taking the French in flank and driving them back with heavy loss. Some individual French regiments were rallied by their officers who displayed more gallantry than tactical sense, and a series of isolated attacks were renewed against the British position. These futile demonstrations continued for about an hour until Soult ordered them to cease and reassembled his army on its original position. In this first battle of Sorauren, the total Allied loss was 2652 as compared with French casualties of over 3000.

Fortunately the thunderstorm which had delayed Hill and Dalhousie had also prevented D'Erlon from pursuing this force, so by the morning of 29 July the 7th Division had joined Wellington. Moreover Hill was now at Lizaso, no further away from the British main body than D'Erlon was from Soult. It can only have been vanity which now decided Soult not to retreat back to France but rather to try the desperate expedient of moving between Wellington and Graham, in order to cut the road between Pamplona and Tolosa and so raise the siege of San Sebastian. The great weakness of this plan was that it depended upon the ability of the French troops facing Wellington at Pamplona to disengage cleanly and march away unscathed across the British front. Yet here the French were facing the British on a two mile front, separated from their enemies by no more than half a mile, while the exits from the French position were, to say the least, difficult. On the night of 28-29 July Soult moved off his artillery, his wounded, and his baggage train toward Roncesvalles. The following night the large scale movement to the west began. Clausel's two divisions managed to reach the Sorauren-Ostiz highway without trouble, but Maucune's troops, who had to move by mere tracks over the hills, got lost. It was really more than could have been expected that so large a movement could have been accomplished silently. In fact the British plainly heard the noise of the French Army moving across its front during the night. Wellington as usual had his troops

under arms an hour before dawn,[5] and when daylight revealed the situation, all the British commander had to do was order a general frontal attack. The three divisions of Conroux, Maucune and Foy were caught by artillery fire to which they could not reply, and although Foy's troops were able to retire up hill out of range, the other two divisions, acting as rearguard in Sorauren, were honour-bound to stand their ground. Consequently, Maucune's division was virtually destroyed, and Conroux's suffered almost as badly. When the British infantry reached Sorauren, they captured 1700 unwounded prisoners.

Meanwhile, farther up the valley of the Ulzama, Dalhousie's 7th Division fell upon Clausel so effectively that by the end of the day he had only about 8000 men of his 17,000 still at his disposal. Reille's division, retreating directly across country and harassed by Picton, lost large numbers of stragglers, while Foy—perhaps with a nice calculation of the futility of further obeying Soult's orders—moved his division independently into France.

While the second battle of Sorauren was thus ending disastrously for the French, D'Erlon moved to attack Hill, who had taken up a position along the edge of a woods near Beunza half a mile south of Lizaso. Since D'Erlon had 18,000 men as opposed to Hill's 9000, the British were driven back, but Hill managed to form another battle line a mile to the rear and here he repulsed a further French attack. When British reinforcements began to arrive at four o'clock in the afternoon, D'Erlon did not renew his assault. Hill's loss in this action was 1056 and the French had about 800 casualties.[6]

On 31 July Soult retreated, covered by D'Erlon's corps, the only intact force remaining to him. On this day Sir William Stewart rashly permitted the 2nd Division to make two frontal assaults on the French rearguard. This cost the British a number of casualties and had no appreciable effect on the French. D'Erlon was thus able to gain the time so badly needed by Clausel and Reille to get clear of the congested passes. D'Erlon then retired in good order.

Once more it would appear that Wellington was not sufficiently energetic in pursuit, for by 2 August Soult had made good his escape to a position behind Echalar. The marshal now had only about 25,000 men available to him out of his eight divisions. Although the French loss in the battles of the Pyrenees accounted for only 12,563 of this deficit, there were 8000-10,000 stragglers who did not rejoin the Eagles for more than a week. The total Allied loss during this series of battles was about 7000. The proof of the demoralization of Soult's army came on 2 August when Lord

Dalhousie recklessly attacked with his 7th Division and the French gave way everywhere. There seems no doubt that Wellington could, had he wished, now have destroyed Soult's army and pushed its beaten remnants ahead of him far into France. Yet once more, possibly for political reasons, Wellington did not pursue but was content to establish his headquarters again at Lesaca and await word from Germany. Although Austria declared war on Napoleon on 12 August, Wellington received no word of this momentous development until 3 September. Therefore during this period the British commander returned to his old policy of reducing San Sebastian and Pamplona and establishing a sound defensive position on the Pyrenees.

The Second Siege of San Sebastian and the Battle of San Marcial

Since Soult's recent defeat had removed any danger from that quarter, Wellington was in no hurry to take San Sebastian. Accordingly, he decided to do the thing in style and not begin the reduction of the fortress until he received a large shipment of heavy guns which were on their way from England. The ships carrying this artillery were windbound for a fortnight and it was not until 19 August that the siege train began to arrive. It was 25 August before the new guns were all in position.

Sir Richard Fletcher, Wellington's chief engineer, drew up the plan for the second assault on San Sebastian. In every detail except the heavier weight of artillery available it was identical with the first plan which had ended so disastrously. The points to be breached were the same, and since they were on the waterfront, the attack had again to be made at low tide over difficult ground and on a narrow front. Burgoyne, the second senior engineer, protested unavailingly against the stupidity of this plan.[7] Indeed, as events were to show, there was reason for the protest, the more so since the French commander, Rey, who still had about 3000 men and 60 guns, had strongly fortified the houses behind the breaches and erected formidable barricades in the streets.

The guns opened up on the morning of 26 August with such a weight of shot that before long the main breach was nearly 300 yards in length. Great pieces of masonry had fallen forward in slabs with the mortar retaining the individual stones, and this presented an approach which looked deceptively easy. By 31 August all was in readiness for the assault which was to be carried out by the 5th Division and by 750 volunteers from the 1st, 4th and Light Divisions. Since the tide determined the time, the attacking troops went in at 10:55 in the morning. All around San Sebastian where the stony hillsides provided a natural amphitheatre, a multitude of spectators, both

military and civilian, assembled to watch the prolonged agony at the breaches. For the first half-hour and more no man set foot on the rubble before the main breach and lived. Wave after wave of the attackers were shot down by a deadly musketry fire. However, at 11:45 a sudden rush by Portuguese troops established a lodgement on the lesser breach. Moreover, General Graham now ordered his massed guns to open fire over the heads of the attackers. Since the range was known, this could be done with relative safety, and the artillery fire played havoc with the defenders. By 12:40 the British infantry were across the main breach and into the town. Street fighting followed for about an hour, until Rey and some 1300 of his soldiers escaped into the castle where they obstinately held out for another nine days.

By the time the town was taken, it was on fire, and a sudden high wind, preceding a storm, fanned the flames. The unhappy inhabitants, who had been forced to take refuge in cellars during the bombardment, not only had their city burned about them but also suffered very considerably from the excesses of the victorious troops. Brandy had an irresistible appeal to Wellington's army and when the British soldiers got drunk in San Sebastian the outrages of Badajoz were repeated. Once again the surviving officers were too few to control their men, and looting, rape and murder became the order of the day. In the middle of the ruined and burning city little groups of soldiers' wives sat around in circles, dividing among themselves the loot which their men brought them. When the story of the day's work became known there was much natural indignation throughout Spain at the sack of San Sebastian, and there was even some anger in London at the excesses of the troops. All in all, this last siege of Wellington's was no more conspicuously successful than his other operations of the same type. The Allied loss during the storm was 2376, of whom no fewer than 856 were killed.

On the same day as the capture of San Sebastian, Soult, who was under considerable pressure to relieve the city, sent three divisions under Reille to cross the Bidasoa by the fords at Irun and Béhobie and frontally attack San Marcial. Simultaneously, four divisions under Clausel were to cross the river just below Vera, break through the Allied lines at this point, and come down on the rear of San Marcial. On the left D'Erlon with two divisions was to act as flank guard.

Wellington, however, had foreseen this move and reinforced the threatened sectors. At 6 o'clock in the morning of 31 August, Soult crossed the Bidasoa by the fords about Béhobie and frontally attacked the position on San Marcial under cover of a dense haze. Reille got across the Bidasoa

without difficulty, but then for nearly two hours found himself unable to advance further because visibility was so poor. When his first attack was launched, it was repulsed with heavy loss by Freire's Spaniards. A second attack, delivered about noon in greater force, was likewise repulsed, and Reille came to a halt. His loss for the day was over 2500.

Further to the right Clausel's attack at first made some headway, but bogged down on the southern side of the Bidasoa. Still, he was not yet beaten when in the afternoon he received orders from Soult to recross the river. The reason for this command was that Reille's attack had failed and that a demonstration by Dalhousie against D'Erlon was seriously worrying the French marshal. Clausel's retirement had been left too late, for when he attempted to recross the river, a considerable portion of his force found itself cut off by the rapid rise of the tidal waters. This body of French troops wandered about throughout the night, seeking a place to cross, until they were fortunate enough to find the bridge at Vera held by no more than a company of the Light Division. This company fought with exceeding gallantry and more than once appealed to the acting divisional commander, Skerrett, for reinforcements. With gross negligence, Skerrett refused either to send help to Captain Cadoux who was guarding the bridge or to attack the French force himself. As a consequence, Cadoux's company, fighting against overwhelming odds, was cut to pieces, and Clausel's men were able to make their way back across the Bidasoa in safety. As a result of this shameful episode, Skerrett's reputation was ruined forever among the Light Division, and soon afterwards he returned to civilian life in England. The French losses at the battle of San Marcial were over 4000, while the Allies suffered 2524 casualties, of which 1679 were among Freire's Spaniards.[8]

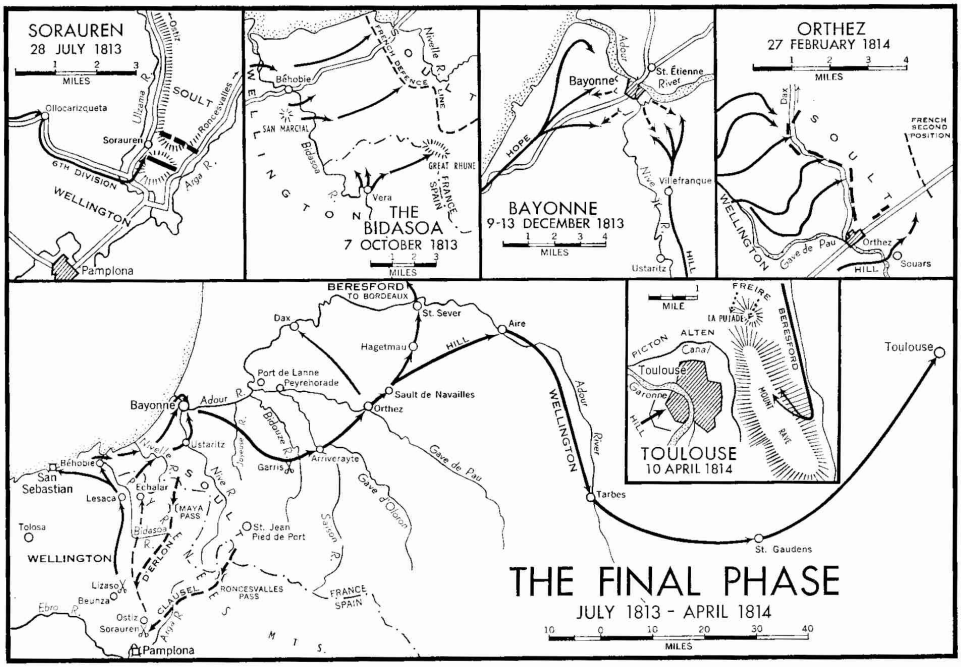
The Passage of the Bidasoa

While these stirring events were taking place in the north, Suchet in Valencia had heard of the battle of Vitoria and had immediately decided to abandon the territory he was holding down. He made the mistake, however, of believing that he might return, and accordingly weakened his field force by detaching numerous strong garrisons which he left behind. These eventually fell one by one, and in the meanwhile Suchet had so reduced the strength of his army that he was unable to play any decisive part in the autumn campaigns. Saragossa was captured by the Spaniards, and Bentinck, who replaced Murray in command of the Sicilian force, now followed Suchet to the Ebro, crossed that river, and on 30 July blockaded Tarragona. However, when Suchet moved against Bentinck in force, the siege had to be raised. Although on 13 September Suchet defeated a portion of Bentinck's

force at Ordal, no further success attended his arms. All throughout September, indeed, Suchet and Soult engaged in a curious correspondence concerning possible joint operations, but this was rendered futile by their mutual suspicion and unwillingness to co-operate.

Since the season was getting late and snow would soon block the inland passes of the Pyrenees, Soult was inclined to believe that Wellington's next move would be between the Maya and the coast. He therefore established the centre of his line about the commanding mountain known as the Great Rhune. This massif towers 2800 feet above the town of Vera and all the surrounding countryside. To the left of his line, Soult placed 14,000 troops under D'Erlon; in the centre on both sides of the Great Rhune he stationed 15,000 under Clausel; on the right, or seaward flank, were 10,000 under Reille; and a central reserve of 8000 lay behind the Great Rhune under the command of Villatte. The right portion of this position was the most weakly defended and was, moreover, the farthest from the central reserve, for Soult, believing that the tidal flats of the Bidasoa constituted a strong natural obstacle, feared most especially a flanking assault on his eastern wing which, if it were successful, would pin him against the sea. It is to be noted too that Soult's reserve was relatively small, only about one-fifth of his disposable force, a circumstance which must be accounted a weakness in the defence of so long a position.

Wellington, who was always careful to collect all types of intelligence reports, had for some time been aware of a fact which would bring about the ruin of all Soult's plans. From the natives who made their living by gathering shrimps at the tidal mouth of the Bidasoa, Wellington had discovered that the seemingly impassable flats could in fact be crossed at low tide. And on this information he based his next plan. On 1 October he rode to Roncesvalles where he took good care to be seen by the French as he ostentatiously inspected the pass. Having thus fixed in Soult's mind the idea that the next major attack would be on the right, Wellington issued his orders to the divisional commanders on 5 October. The 2nd Division at Roncesvalles and the 6th Division at Maya were to remain where they were guarding the passes, but most of the rest of the army was shifted to the west. Three Spanish divisions and the Light Division were to attack Soult's centre about the Great Rhune, with four British and one Portuguese divisions in support. The main threat, however, was to develop across the treacherous tidal flats. Here, 24,000 men were allocated to move against only Maucune's weak division of 4000. This decisive left-flanking attack was to be made by the 5th and 1st Divisions, Freire's Spaniards, and nine Portuguese battalions.



In the event surprise was complete. Some of the 5th Division actually got across the Bidasoa before a shot was fired. The attack began at 7:25 in the morning of 7 October and by nine o'clock Reille had been forced out of his position, Soult's line turned in its entirety, and the British placed in position to take all the heights above the Bidasoa.

The concurrent attack in the centre against Soult's fortified lines resulted in much heavier fighting, but it is significant that some British officers who participated in this assault believed that the defence was not as strong as it might have been. The truth of the matter was that continued defeats had begun to take the heart out of the French Army. Clausel's line was forced back, and although the Great Rhune did not fall until the next day, the whole position had obviously become untenable and had to be abandoned.

Still Wellington did not advance further, much to the surprise of both the French Army and his own. The reason for this restraint was the fear that Napoleon might still win in Germany, make peace with Britain's allies as he had done so often before, and then turn in force upon the British. Wellington explained his reasoning to Lord Bathurst: "I am very doubtful indeed about the advantage of going any farther forward here at present. I see that Buonaparte was still at Dresden on the 28th, and unless I can fight a general action with Soult and gain complete victory, which the nature of the country

would scarcely admit of, I should do but little good to the allies. . . It is impossible to move our right till Pamplona shall fall which I think will be within a week; and I will then decide according to the state of affairs at the moment."[9] A further consideration which influenced Wellington was that he did not feel himself strong enough at this time to enter France without the support of his Spanish and Portuguese auxiliaries. Yet these troops, who had so many wrongs to avenge, would be almost certain to commit outrages upon the civilian inhabitants. It was the reaction to this which Wellington feared. He had seen enough of guerrilla warfare in Spain to have a very wholesome desire not to have to combat it himself, and he was afraid that, if his army began to plunder and pillage in the south of France, the entire countryside would rise in arms against him. Moreover, in France almost every man had received some military training. He explained his attitude explicitly in a letter to Sir John Hope: "If we were five times stronger than we are, we ought not to enter France, if we cannot prevent the men from plundering."[10]

On the last day of October the blockaded fortress of Pamplona finally surrendered. The capitulation only came, however, when the last of the rations were gone, when all the horses and mules had been eaten, and after the troops had been subsisting for some time on dogs, cats and rats. Prior to the surrender Wellington had been informed by the commander of the Spanish investing force, Carlos de España, that the governor of Pamplona was mining the fortress. Wellington replied in part: "The destruction of the city and an attempt to escape can only be considered as a scheme for doing a sensible damage to the Spanish nation, against all the laws of war, and then throwing themselves upon the generosity of the Allied army. I need tell you, General, that I feel no inclination to treat generously those who behave in such a way. If the garrison of Pamplona does the least damage to the city, I order you to grant them no capitulation, and no terms of grace. You will, without further orders, shoot the governor and all his officers and non-commissioned officers, and one-tenth of the rank and file."[11] It is perhaps fortunate for Wellington's reputation that Carlos de España did not get the opportunity of obeying these orders, an opportunity which, in the light of his subsequent career, he would have undoubtedly seized with relish.

The Battle of the Nivelle

Soult, who had now taken his stand with some 62,000 troops forward of the Nivelle, began to build a series of fortified works. Now however that Pamplona had fallen, Wellington was ready to attack. For this new offensive

against the Nivelle position the British commander massed a force of 82,000 infantry, of whom 38,000 were British, 22,000 Portuguese and 22,000 Spaniards.

Realizing that Soult's line was too long to be strongly held throughout its length, Wellington planned to demonstrate all along the sixteen-mile front but to attack the French centre with overwhelming force. He disposed his army with Hill on the right, Beresford in the centre, and on the left General Hope, who was replacing Graham, recently invalided home with eye trouble. Hill's division about Roncesvalles, having been relieved by Mina's troops, began to move west on 7 November, and although this movement was somewhat delayed because of the deep snow in the mountain passes, the attack began on the morning of 10 November. Hope only demonstrated on the British left, but for the real attack in the centre there were no fewer than 60,000 troops, including seven veteran British divisions and the Spanish divisions of Giron, Morillo and Longa. Beresford was nominally in command in this sector, but Wellington himself accompanied him.

At six o'clock in the morning of a cold bright day, the signal guns on Atchubia Mountain notified the British centre that it was time for the advance. The French here were in strong natural positions and they first fought from behind rocks and boulders before they were driven into the small stone castles which they had erected. The British troops captured these one by one with great dash and gallantry. The French officers were extremely brave, but the French rank and file once more showed little of their former determination.[12] When the attackers saw this, the cry went up "They are wavering!", and the assault was pushed forward even more confidently than before. Soult for his part seemed reluctant to commit his reserves and launched no counter-attacks. By two o'clock in the afternoon the French line of redoubts and fortifications had everywhere been forced.

After thus breaking the French centre, Wellington had intended to wheel and pin the French right, but by the time the victorious troops could be reorganized the early November twilight had already come down. Soult, taking advantage of this, made good his escape to a new line between the sea and the Nive. The French loss on the Nivelle had been 4351, including about 1200 prisoners, while the Allied casualties totalled some 2450.[13]

The Battles of the Nive

Wellington now decided to put his troops into winter quarters instead of advancing farther. Again it was basically a political situation which led to this resolve. Although what was virtually the last of Napoleon's great armies

had been decisively defeated in the flaming city of Leipzig on 19 October, there was still no certainty that the Allies would press forward with a winter campaign. There was still much magic in Napoleon's name, and the distinct possibility existed that, rather than risk a final campaign against him, the Allies would agree to leave Napoleon on the throne of a France reduced to pre-revolutionary size. In fact, negotiations to this end were actually going on, and they were continued until the Emperor's blind intransigence at last decided the Allies to resume operations. Even so, the leading Allied corps did not cross the Rhine until 22 December.

Before resuming operations, Wellington, after much heart-searching, decided to send his Spanish divisions back to Spain. The primary reason for this was his fear of provoking a national uprising in France. He wrote to Bathurst: ". . . But I despair of the Spaniards. They are in so miserable a state, that it is really hardly fair to expect that they will refrain from plundering a beautiful country, into which they enter as conquerors; particularly, adverting to the miseries which their own country has suffered from its invaders. I cannot, therefore, venture to bring them back into France, unless I can feed and pay them; and the official letter which will go to your Lordship by this post will show you the state of our finances, and our prospects. If I could now bring forward 20,000 good Spaniards, paid and fed, I should have Bayonne. If I could bring forward 40,000, I do not know where I should stop. Now I have both the 20,000 and the 40,000 at my command, upon this frontier, but I cannot venture to bring forward any for want of means of paying and supporting them. Without pay and food, they must plunder; and if they plunder, they will ruin us all."[14]

In the event, this policy was highly successful, for Soult was soon complaining that, since Wellington was able to pay cash for everything he wanted, the British were able to obtain far more from the countryside than could the French Army. However, Wellington was soon forced to modify his policy of not using Spanish troops in France. Morillo's division remained with him throughout, and before long other Spanish forces were called back to serve. Indeed, in the final major battle of the Peninsular War, the Spaniards very fittingly bore the brunt of the casualties.

Wellington had about 63,500 men after the Spaniards had been sent away, as against Soult's force of 54,500. In spite of his superiority being thus reduced, the British commander decided to move in on Bayonne from two sides, and, by strangling Soult's communications, force the French Army to evacuate the city and retreat further into France. He therefore ordered five divisions under Hill and Beresford to cross the Nive and

advance along the east bank of the stream. When the British began to cross at dawn of 9 December, they met little opposition. At seven o'clock on the same morning, Hope, with the 1st and 5th Divisions and two Portuguese brigades under command and with the Light Division as a flank guard on his right, advanced on the left of the Nive to demonstrate against Bayonne. The French made no real resistance and some ground was gained with trifling loss, but at nightfall Hope left only picquets to guard the conquered territory and marched the bulk of his troops back to their billets. Thereupon Soult decided to attack Hope's weak and scattered force with all of his nine divisions, in the hope of beating it before the other and larger portion of the British Army could come back from the other side of the Nive. Early in the morning of 10 December Clausel with six divisions launched a sudden attack on the Light Division. However, the French had difficulty in deploying their troops rapidly in the extremely close and broken ground; the British veterans fought an excellent delaying action; the French soldiers, who had had to march for six hours in heavy rain before they were in position to attack, were tired before they entered the battle; and—most important of all—French morale was bad. By three o'clock in the afternoon Clausel's attack had petered out.

Meanwhile Reille with two divisions had launched an attack at 9:30 in the morning on Hope's left flank near the sea. Here there were only two Portuguese brigades available behind the outlying picquets, for Hope had foolishly stationed the 5th Division three miles away, while the 1st Division and Lord Aylmer's brigade had actually been moved back ten miles. At first the French attack was successful and the British picquets were driven in at once. Confused and heavy fighting followed in the thickly wooded country behind the British outposts. For a while the situation appeared so favourable for the French that Soult, reinforcing success, strengthened his right wing with Foy's division and with Villatte's reserve, which was equivalent to a division. Late in the afternoon, however, the British 1st Division and Aylmer's brigade arrived, and thereupon the French attacks ceased. The following night a very significant incident occurred when three German *Rheinbund* battalions who had been fighting in Soult's army made their way over to the British lines and surrendered *en masse*.

Sir John Hope had learned little from the events of the first day's fighting, for on 11 December his picquets were again caught unprepared and his troops scattered by a French attack which drove the British back for about a mile. On this occasion, however, there was no serious danger, since adequate reinforcements were available. When the British rallied and reorganized, the French did not press this attack. In his memorandum to

Clarke, the French Minister of War, Soult described this attack as a mere affair of outposts, yet actually it must have been rather more serious than that since the British losses for the day were 320.[15]

Now that Hill's corps on the east side of the Nive had been weakened by the reinforcements sent to Hope, Soult resolved to counter-march back across the river and again attack with superior numbers. His possession of the numerous Bayonne bridges enabled him to do this without too much difficulty. In theory, there was much to be said for this strategy. It was, indeed, almost precisely the same as that which had so distinguished Napoleon's first Italian campaign. But Soult was not Napoleon, and the most brilliant strategical plan is always at the mercy of its tactical execution. Wellington, moreover, who had foreseen the French move, had already made his preparations to reinforce Hill, and had ordered an additional bridge to be built across the Nive. Of course Wellington could himself have attacked on the west side of the river with superior force, but success here would only have driven Soult back to his fortified positions around Bayonne. Furthermore, unless some very decided advantage could be gained from taking the offensive, Wellington always preferred to stand on the defensive.

As dusk fell on 12 December Soult began to move troops east across the Nive on the Bayonne bridges. The weather now came to his aid, for heavy rains upstream caused the river to rise rapidly and break the extra bridge which Wellington had had built at Villefranque. Fortunately, the bridge at Ustaritz held, but the 6th Division now had ten miles to march before it could cross by it.

By now Hill had moved forward and taken up a position between the Adour and the Nive. Although he had only 14,000 men at his disposal, the British general was confident, for his troops were all veterans. Consequently, even when he heard of the loss of the Villefranque bridge, Hill decided that he could hold for the four hours or so it would take reinforcements to reach him. On this occasion, as was usual with this general, his calculations were completely justified by the event.

Hill's position was divided into three separate portions by two deep and impassable gorges, so that communication between his centre and either wing was only possible by way of roads well to the rear. This disadvantage, however, was offset by the fact that the French were in exactly the same case. Since the night of 12-13 December was cold, frosty, and bright with a full winter moon, Hill's force was able both to hear and see the French troops crossing the Nive bridges to its front. The battle began at about eight o'clock the following morning when Soult attacked in the centre. Here

Barnes' and Ashworth's brigades stood astride the highroad running between St. Jean-Pied-de-Port and Bayonne. Heavy fighting soon developed in this sector, and things began to look serious for the British. Matters were not helped when the new commanding officer of the 71st Regiment, Sir Nathaniel Peacock, a "coward in action and a tyrant in quarters", first ordered his regiment to retire and then, finding even this second position too close to the enemy, took himself off to the rear, leaving his regiment to its own devices.[16]

This action of Peacock's left an ominous gap in the left centre of the British line and through this French troops now began to push. The situation also began to look threatening on the right wing where Byng's brigade was under heavy pressure. However, Hill now knew that the 6th Division was closing rapidly behind him and that the pontoon bridge across the Nive had been restored. If he could hold for only another half-hour, the day would be saved. Therefore he personally led a counter-attack with the last of his reserve, but even before this force could make itself felt, the troops on the position had launched their own counter-attack and had driven the French off. At this crucial point Wellington arrived on the scene, and seeing the manner in which Hill had withstood the French assault, he generously said to him, "The battle is all your own". Thus Hill was allowed to complete the rout of the French with his own troops in his own way. The British loss for the day was 1775, while the French casualties numbered about 3300.[17]

Although his plan to take advantage of the superior communications afforded by the Bayonne bridges was above criticism, Soult had again been somewhat clumsy in the actual handling of the battle. He had been reluctant to commit his reserves and—as at Albuera—had not pressed home his initial advantage with sufficient energy. As Wellington later said in explaining why he considered Masséna the more formidable opponent: "Soult never seemed to know how to handle his troops after a battle had begun."[18] At all events, whatever hopes Soult might have entertained of again taking the offensive had now disappeared for good. There was nothing left for the French to do but fall back to the line of the Lower Adour.

On the Adour

After defeating the French on the Nive, Wellington made no move for nearly a month. As before, the uncertain political situation was responsible for this inactivity. During this period he was urged by various French royalists to raise the standard of the lilies and proclaim for the Bourbons, and he was assured by these gentlemen that this was all that was required to

set off a formidable royalist uprising through the length and breadth of France. With his customary sagacity Wellington listened to these exhortations with considerable reserve, and steadfastly refused to encourage any revolt in France. Even more important than his doubts of the strength of the royalist cause was his knowledge that the Allies, who had begun at Frankfurt to negotiate with Caulaincourt, Napoleon's envoy, were continuing to bargain at Châtillon. In actual fact, these negotiations dragged on until 11 March. Therefore, to encourage a royalist uprising when there was still the possibility that peace might be made with Napoleon on the basis of the pre-revolutionary boundaries would have been to run the risk of having later to abandon the rebels to the tender mercies of an Emperor confirmed upon his throne.

In the meantime, the French peasantry and middle class proved very ready to co-operate with the British and to supply Wellington with whatever he required. Soult's army, on the contrary, received little co-operation from their own people. Not unnaturally, the French soldiers resented this attitude and were the more willing to take what they wanted by force, a habit which was in any case deeply ingrained because of their experience in Spain. Thus the French civilians very soon actually came to prefer the British to the French occupation.

During this period, too, fraternization developed on a large scale. Sentries and picquets almost never molested each other, even although they were often posted no more than a few yards apart. The cavalry horses of both armies would water alternatively from the same stream by mutual arrangements and the story was even told of an Irish sentry who was found one night with a British musket on one shoulder and a French one on the other, doing guard duty for both armies, the French picquet opposite him having gone off to buy brandy for the two of them.[19]

Wellington was determined to pay cash for all his supplies, but he had considerable difficulty in obtaining the appropriate coin, since nothing could induce the French peasants to accept Spanish or Portuguese silver. The British commander solved this problem by establishing his own secret mint which he operated with the help of forty or fifty professional coiners who were found without difficulty in the ranks of his army. This mint was soon turning out forged 5-franc Napoleonic pieces from melted-down Spanish dollars. Apparently the most difficult part of the business was to prevent the mint's employees from introducing lead or pewter into the coinage and pocketing the silver thus saved.[20]

Napoleon had by now persuaded the captive King Ferdinand to sign the Treaty of Valençay, a document which provided for breaking the Spanish alliance with England, denying Wellington the use of Spanish troops, territory, or ports, and withdrawing Spain from the war. So considerable were the French Emperor's powers of self-delusion that he appears to have believed that this extraordinary treaty would be ratified by the Spanish Cortes and honoured by the King. Indeed so certain was Napoleon of this outcome that in mid-January of 1814 he ordered Soult to give up 3000 cavalry and 18 guns, and five days later directed a further withdrawal of 10,000 infantry and two divisional batteries of field artillery. By 21 January Soult had only seven infantry divisions instead of nine, one cavalry division instead of two, and 77 field guns instead of 112. At this same time Suchet in Catalonia was also deprived of 10,000 infantry. Soult's new dispositions now placed Reille about Bayonne with two divisions; one division was strung out along the Adour as far as Port de Lanne; while east and south of the Adour there were three divisions. Soult established his headquarters at Peyrehorade. Thus there were four French divisions on the left side of the Adour and three guarding its lower reaches.

Wellington now planned to attack Soult's left by a series of flanking movements similar to those employed in 1813 in the Vitoria campaign. This was intended to drive Soult's main army eastward away from Bayonne. Then when Soult had reinforced his left wing, Wellington planned to bridge the Adour near the sea and invest Bayonne from the north. The force assigned to the attack on Soult's left consisted of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th and Light Divisions, Le Cor's Portuguese and Morillo's Spaniards, plus three light cavalry brigades, a total of some 43,000 infantry and 2500 cavalry. Sir John Hope with the 1st and 5th Divisions, Aylmer's British brigade, Bradford and Campbell's Portuguese brigades, and Vandeleur's light cavalry brigade, totalling in all some 18,000, was to cross the Adour and invest Bayonne. Some 16,000 Spanish troops were also to be called up to assist in the investment.

On 12 February Hill advanced with the 2nd Division and Le Cor's Portuguese, Morillo's Spaniards and one cavalry brigade. Beresford with the 4th and 7th Divisions and two light cavalry brigades was to contain Soult's main body, while Picton's 3rd Division was to act as a link between Beresford and Hill. On 16 February Beresford was strengthened by the arrival of the Light Division and on 21 February by the 6th Division.

Each of the four principal tributaries of the Adour, which are from west to east the Joyeuse, the Bidouze, the Saison and the Gave de Pau, afforded

defensible positions for the French. Hill's advance turned the flank of the French division on the Joyeuse, forcing it to fall back half way between that river and the Bidouze. By 15 February, after a stiff fight at Garris, from which they only extricated themselves after heavy loss, the French had retired behind the latter stream, and on the night of 16 February the French division which had been engaged at Garris retreated to a position behind the Saison. This made it impossible for Soult to hold the line of the Bidouze, so the other French divisions were also forced to fall back behind the Saison. Soult now ordered two of his three divisions north of the Adour to move east to reinforce his four divisions on the Saison. On 17 February Hill attacked the bridges and fords across this river at Arriverayte and won the crossing without much difficulty.

Rather undeserved good fortune now attended Hope's investment of Bayonne. While he demonstrated noisily to the south by a simulated attack on the French fortified camps, he began to pass his troops over the estuary of the Adour by means of small boats and rafts. On 23 February the inadequate British force which had crossed the river was weakly attacked, but the French were beaten off with the aid of a flight of Congreve rockets which, by the happiest of chances, happened to burst accurately in the head of the attacking column. The night of 23-24 February was calm and moonlit, and many more British troops got over the river. By the evening of 24 February the lodgement north of the Adour consisted of 8000 men, and the following day, with the help of the navy, the bridge across the Adour was begun at a point where the estuary was only 300 yards wide. This bridge was completed by noon the next day and by nightfall there were 15,000 British troops north of the Adour and 16,000, including Spaniards, south of Bayonne. On 27 February the suburb of St. Etienne was successfully stormed after some heavy street fighting.

The Battle of Orthez

Meanwhile on 24 February Wellington had attacked the fords of the Gave d'Oloron along a 15-mile front, while Hill on the right wing moved wide to outflank the French position. The crossing was achieved with no difficulty and in the face of very minor resistance. Soult thereupon ordered his army to concentrate at Orthez and defend the line of the Gave de Pau, a move which was completed by noon of 25 February. Hill arrived in front of Orthez the same afternoon and cleared the south bank of the river. By the morning of 27 February Wellington had passed five divisions and two cavalry brigades over the Gave de Pau.

North-west of Orthez there is a ridge some 500 feet high which runs roughly north-south and is crossed by the highroad to Dax. The crest of this ridge affords an excellent view of the countryside; its slopes are open and grassy and are intersected by the muddy channels of three rivulets which run down to join the Gave de Pau. This ridge Soult took for his defensive position, stationing Reille on the north of his line with two divisions plus one brigade, putting D'Erlon in the centre with two divisions, and posting Clausel with two divisions less one brigade on the left. Clausel's extreme left wing held the town of Orthez. In all Soult had about 36,000 men and 48 guns, while Wellington had seven infantry divisions, totalling about 38,000, three cavalry brigades of about 3300, and 54 guns.

At 8:30 on the morning of 27 February the battle opened on the British left, but after some initial success this attack was checked with loss and a subsequent French advance drove the British back to their original position. The attempt to turn the French right had failed. Picton then attacked in the centre, but when this assault was also checked, Picton did not persist, since he had orders to wait until the French right had been turned before seriously committing himself. Wellington, seeing that his original plan had miscarried, decided at about 11:30 a.m. to attack in force against the French right and centre, employing the 3rd, 6th and 7th Divisions and Barnard's brigade of the Light Division. Hard fighting followed for the next two hours, but the French eventually gave way, falling back to a second position some two miles to the north.

Meanwhile, on the British right Hill had attacked the fords of Souars with 12,000 men and had then marched to turn the second French position on its left. The French here fought well, but they were heavily outnumbered and the opposition to Hill's advance was therefore not serious. Soult saw the danger of being encircled by Hill's flank march and accordingly ordered a general retirement. At first this retirement was carried out in good order, but for once the French were hard pressed, being much harassed by the British horse artillery and assaulted by infantry every time they stood too long. Soon their retreat accelerated until at last it became a headlong flight. The French Army was in complete disorder by the time it reached the bridge at Sault de Navailles.

From this point the British pursuit was again rather ineffective, partly at least because the country was so enclosed and marked with walls and ditches that the cavalry did not have much scope, and partly because during the action at Orthez a spent musket ball had struck Wellington's sword-hilt, driving it into his thigh so that he was for a time incapacitated. Fortunately

the wound was not serious, but for the next few days the British commander was in considerable pain and found riding difficult. Even as it was, the French retreat did not stop until Hagetmau was reached, sixteen miles away from the battlefield. The French losses at Orthez were over 4000 as compared to an Allied casualty list of 2164,[21] and by the time the French Army reached St. Sever on the morning of 28 February it had been further diminished by a considerable number of desertions. Now for the first time the British began to see large numbers of young men in civilian clothes in the French villages, many of them with the close-cropped hair of the conscript.

The Battle of Toulouse and the End of the War

Soult now had the choice of retiring on Bordeaux or east to Toulouse. He chose Toulouse because the countryside in that direction would be better able to support his army and because a threat to the flank of an advancing enemy is normally as good a deterrent as a rearguard action. By 1 March the British cavalry had occupied Dax, and Wellington had established his headquarters at St. Sever. Here he halted for eight days. Between 10 and 11 March the British heavy cavalry, which had wintered in Spain, and five Portuguese cavalry regiments, making in all some 5500 sabres, began to arrive; Wellington's mounted strength was now about 8000. On 2 March Hill with the 2nd Division and Le Cor's Portuguese ran into Clausel who had his two divisions about Aire. Hill attacked and drove off the two French formations in divergent directions. Once again the French did not fight with their old tenacity. The foreknowledge of defeat was heavy upon them, and—even more important perhaps—the new conscripts were of a different calibre from the old veterans. Only a month before, at the battle of Champaubert, Marshal Marmont had asked a young soldier why he did not fire and the boy had replied that he would fire as well as anyone if he knew how to load.[22] Soult's army on the southern frontier was receiving drafts who had no better training.

On 4 March Wellington received an agent from Lynch, the loyalist mayor of Bordeaux, who informed Wellington of the weakness of the garrison and promised to hand over the city to the British. In the light of this information Wellington ordered Beresford to march on Bordeaux with the 4th and 7th Divisions and Vivian's cavalry brigade. Since there was no opposition to this move, Beresford left the 4th Division at Langon and entered Bordeaux on the morning of 12 March with the 7th Division and the cavalry. Upon the arrival of the British, the mayor and the great majority of

the populace of Bordeaux came out to meet them. The French officials tore the tricolour from their hats and put up the white cockade of the Bourbons. The Imperial flag was hauled down from Bordeaux tower and the royal standard hoisted in its place. Later, a *Te Deum* Mass was sung in the great cathedral in honour of the restoration of Louis XVIII. Yet, although the Duke of Angoulême issued an unauthorized proclamation to the effect that the Bourbons had now returned, conducted by their "generous allies", he found himself quite unable to raise a royalist army. There were officers aplenty who came forward, but the rank and file showed no desire to enlist themselves under the lilies.

When Wellington advanced again on 19 March, Soult fell back to Tarbes where a rearguard action was fought the following day by Clausel. Soult meanwhile continued his retreat by way of St. Gaudens to Toulouse which he entered on 24 March.

The last general action of the Peninsular War was fought after the final Armistice had already been signed. Wellington followed Soult up cautiously and it was not until 10 April that he was able to assault Toulouse. Very fittingly in this last battle of the war there was a large part for Spanish troops. The main attack on Toulouse was to be made on the north-eastern circumference of the city by General Freire's two Spanish divisions. Supporting them on their left were to be the 4th and 6th Divisions. Hill on the west bank of the Garonne was to demonstrate against the south-western defences, while the 3rd and Light Divisions were to occupy the attention of the defenders on the north-west.

The battle began at five o'clock in the morning with Hill's demonstration. Then Picton attacked with the 3rd Division, rather more heavily than had been intended, and was sharply repulsed. Meanwhile Freire's Spaniards advanced to capture an outlying hill, the Pujade Knoll, and then prepared themselves for the main assault on Mount Rave, the principal French defence in this sector. While Beresford with the 4th and 6th Divisions was marching south across the front of Mount Rave, Freire delivered a premature attack which failed with heavy loss. General Taupin who was commanding the French forces opposite the leading brigades of the 4th and 6th Divisions now put in a counter-attack. This was the last time in the Peninsular War when the column was pitted against the line, and the result was the same as on every previous occasion. The French attack made no headway, Taupin was mortally wounded, and the British surged forward to gain the crest of Mount Rave.

On the north-west Picton, seeing that Freire's Spaniards had been repulsed, now determined to distract the enemy by launching another assault with the 3rd Division. Wellington had specifically ordered him not to do this, since the enemy lines here were far too strong, but Picton put in three separate attacks all of which were bloodily repulsed. Now for the second time and with the utmost gallantry Freire's Spaniards again attacked, but although they lost extremely heavily (over half of their senior officers became casualties) they were again unable to pierce the French defences. The 6th Division now began to advance north along the crest of Mount Rave. The fighting here was severe and the losses on both sides were high, but at about five o'clock in the evening the French finally began to give way and Soult ordered Mount Rave to be abandoned. Since darkness was now falling, the battle stopped, and both sides slept upon their positions. Before Wellington could renew his attack the next day, ammunition had to be brought up for artillery preparation and this took so long that no serious action could commence before 12 April. However, on the night 11-12 April Soult abandoned his positions about Toulouse and marched off towards Carcassonne.[23]

All of this had been needless endeavour, for the war was already over. On the last day of March the Allies had entered Paris and Napoleon, faced with the final opposition of his marshals, had signed his abdication on the night of 4 April. The great epic was all but done. The man who had seemed almost more than human in the brilliance of his victories was broken at last, and the Revolution, which he had in some sense perpetuated, finally appeared to be finished. All across Europe the "kings crept out again to feel the sun".

On the morning of 12 April Wellington entered Toulouse amid strange scenes of rejoicing on the part of the people. While he had been successful Napoleon had been the undoubted idol of France, but now that he had failed Toulouse hailed his conquerors. The imperial statues were torn down, the great emblazoned "Ns" were ripped off the facades of buildings, and the white cockade everywhere replaced the tricolour. That same evening Wellington learned of Napoleon's abdication. He immediately sent word of this to Marshal Soult, asking him to clarify his intentions. Soult, who when all is said and done had served the Emperor well, was doubtful of the authenticity of this report. It seemed at the end too much to believe that the victor of Austerlitz and Ulm and Jena had finally fallen. The marshal was especially shocked by being told that the French Provisional Government, in an action typical of the Bourbons, had appointed as the new Minister of War Dupont of the capitulation of Baylen. Accordingly Soult asked for an

armistice until he could verify the report, but this Wellington refused. On 17 April, however, Marshal Soult received a dispatch from Berthier which confirmed that all was indeed over and that the Empire was no more.

One quite inexcusable incident remains to be related of the Peninsular War. The French Governor of Bayonne, Thouvenot, who knew of the Armistice and must have been aware of the futility of his action, ordered a sortie from that city on the night of 14 April. He had not defended Bayonne well when there might have been some point in doing so, but now in a fit of pique he made himself responsible for 905 French and 838 British casualties before his sortie was repulsed. These were the final shots fired in the Peninsular War, and it is perhaps not unfitting that they were fired hopelessly for a lost cause.

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[1] Sir George Murray was now once more Wellington's QMG, replacing the highly unsatisfactory Gordon. Since Wellington had every confidence in Murray, he had gradually allowed that officer to assume many of the responsibilities of a Chief of Staff. *Cf.* S. G. P. Ward, *Wellington's Headquarters* (Oxford, 1957), 145-152.

[2] *Dispatches*, X, 596.

[3] Napier, VI, 130, relates that Wellington was pleased to hear the shouting because Soult, being a cautious commander, would "delay his attack to ascertain the cause of these cheers; that will give time for the sixth division to arrive and I shall beat him". This story may well be true, but it is not corroborated from any other source, and Napier himself was in England at the time.

[4] Captain John Kincaid, *Adventures in the Rifle Brigade* (New York, 1929), 53.

[5] The British Army's custom was to muster under arms an hour before daybreak and remain so until a *grey* horse could be seen a mile off. (*Ibid.*, 25.)

[6] Oman, VI, 704.

[7] *The Life and Letters of Sir John Burgoyne*, edited by Lt.-Col. the Hon. George Wrottesley (London, 1873), I, 273.

[8] Oman, VII, 57.

[9] *Dispatches*, IX, 207.

[10] *Ibid.*, 169-170.

[11] *Ibid.*, 210. It is to be noted in passing that the British commander wrote French quite fluently. On the other hand, a Frenchman was later to comment that Wellington spoke French as he fought the French—"*bravement*".

[12] Napier, VI, 338-353, contains an excellent first-hand account of this action.

[13] Oman, VII, 207.

[14] *Dispatches*, XI, 306-7.

[15] Oman, VII, 256. The French casualty figures for 11 December cannot be separated from the general casualty returns for the Battle of the Nive.

[16] Oman, VI, 270, 280-1. Sir Nathaniel Peacock had seen fit to retire from the action as wounded when a musket ball had passed through the skirts of his coat, "a wound that a tailor could cure". General Hill found Sir Nathaniel half a mile behind his regiment beating Portuguese mule drivers in the pretense of getting them up to the front. It is recorded that this was the second occasion (Talavera being the first) when anyone ever heard "Daddy" Hill swear. Peacock was subsequently cashiered for cowardice.

[17] Oman, VII, 277.

[18] *Croker Papers*, III, 275.

[19] Sir George Bell, *Rough Notes by an Old Soldier* (London, 1867), 133.

[20] Oman, VII, 288-9.

[21] *Ibid.*, 374*n*.

[22] A. G. Macdonell, *Napoleon and His Marshals* (London, 1934), 293.

[23] This account of the battle of Toulouse has been drawn from the following principal sources: *Dispatches*, XI, 632-638; Oman, VII, 465-495; Fortescue, X, 77-90.

Chapter X

Conclusion

Wellington

One of the most striking facts about the Peninsular War is Wellington's early recognition of the inherent superiority of the defensive over the offensive. It is interesting to note that another veteran of the Napoleonic era, the Prussian General von Clausewitz, drew exactly the same conclusion. This superiority of the defensive was due almost entirely to the stopping power of infantry fire. In every single battle in the Peninsula, as again at Waterloo, the line defeated the column, and the prime reason for this was simply that in any given period of time the line could develop a greater weight of aimed fire. Yet even in other respects the defensive proved the stronger form of war, as the Lines of Torres Vedras and the sieges of Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, Burgos, and San Sebastian all proved.

Cavalry was a definite disappointment in the Peninsula. It was virtually helpless against unshaken infantry, and was in fact only used for screens, reconnaissances, and advanced flank, and rearguard roles. Time and again the British pursuits in Spain were ineffectual. This was only partly due to the enclosed and broken nature of the countryside and to Wellington's caution. The truth of the matter would seem to be that infantry already possessed sufficient fire-power to make cavalry actions against rearguards expensive.

Although artillery certainly proved its usefulness in Spain, it too failed to play a major role in the field actions of the Peninsular War. The guns, however, were essential for the reduction of strong fortresses, and even for those less strong, such as the Salamanca forts and Burgos. Wellington suffered throughout all his campaigns in the Peninsula from a chronic shortage of trained engineers. These troops were found to be absolutely essential for the reduction of fortresses, for bridging operations, for the building of fortifications, and for road building.

In the realm of strategy, Wellington's primary intention had been to tie up as many French troops as possible in the Peninsula, so that Britain's continental allies might be encouraged to continue the fight. And from the very beginning this strategy was eminently successful. Napoleon was later to speak of the Peninsular War as the "Spanish ulcer", the running sore which gradually drained his strength and contributed substantially to his

final defeat. The principal element in Wellington's strategy was that Spain, and even more so Portugal, was a distant and inaccessible theatre, further in time from France by the overland routes than from Britain by the sea. The mobility which sea-power always confers was used by Wellington to facilitate the supply of his army, to provide arms and equipment to the Spanish guerrillas, and, when the time was ripe, to shift his main base in a way which the French could not hope to imitate. These factors of space and time were powerfully aided by the rugged and mountainous nature of the Spanish countryside. Yet all this would have been of no avail, if it had not been for the courage and tenacity of the Spanish people whose continued resistance forced the French to garrison every inch of territory they wished to hold and compelled them to employ a phenomenal number of troops in a static role. Thus, even when there were more than a quarter of a million French soldiers in the Peninsula, none of Napoleon's marshals was ever able to muster and supply the 100,000 men required to evict the British.

Wellington's generalship has frequently been called cautious and defensive, and there is much truth in this, although it is of doubtful validity as a criticism. Certainly, in addition to his realization of the superiority of the defensive, there was a natural habit of mind which favoured predictable courses and deprecated the running of risks. This is illustrated, not only by his many defensive victories, but also by his hesitations before the great offensive battle of Salamanca, by his reluctance to strike at his pursuers during the retreat from Madrid, by the conduct of his sieges, and by the failure of his pursuits. Yet it should be borne in mind that at no time could Wellington risk a defeat as could the French. As he himself said, "I knew that in my early years in the Peninsula, if I were to lose 500 men without the clearest necessity, I should be recalled and brought upon my knees to the bar of the House of Commons."[1] Wellington, like Moore before him, commanded the only British field army in existence and if it were lost it could not be replaced. So instead of his caution appearing as a defect, it might well be argued that it was a necessary limitation imposed upon him, and that his overcoming this limitation merely affords another proof of his genius.

Yet if Wellington had genius, it was of a different order from the genius of Napoleon. Wellington did not excel in that bold imagination and strong will which could foresee intricate combinations upon future battlefields and bring these to pass. His intellect was neither many-sided nor profound. Whereas Napoleon could discourse, always interestingly and frequently with insight, on such diverse topics as astronomy, the immortality of the soul, higher mathematics, contemporary poetry, or the possibility of a Suez Canal,

Wellington had the intellectual interests of an Anglo-Irish country gentleman. Certainly he did not have the type of mind which could envisage ahead of time the details of an Ulm campaign or the great psychological trap of an Austerlitz. His strong point, on the contrary, lay in his faculty of judgement. He was a sure practitioner of the art of the possible, and those who would belittle this practical quality would do well to remember that at the end of the game it was Wellington who won. And not only at the end of the game. From Roliça in 1808 to Waterloo in 1815, his only real failure was at Burgos.

Again, those critics of Wellington who complain of his handling of personal relationships often tell only a part of the story. Unable to gain the affection of his troops and never attempting in the very least to do so, Wellington was nevertheless respected, feared, and trusted by his army. Napoleon, who wasted men with a criminal prodigality, was idolized by his soldiers. On the other hand, Wellington, who was grudging of the life of his least guerrilla auxiliary, was never loved. But perhaps it was better to serve the British general than the French Emperor.[2]

In his relations with his generals Wellington was handicapped, as we have seen, by the short-sighted policy of the Horse Guards. He was sent so many incompetents that he soon became extremely reluctant to delegate authority. Of all the senior commanders in the army probably only Hill, Graham, Beresford and Craufurd had his trust, and in that order. This reluctance to delegate command undoubtedly sprang in part from Wellington's consciousness of his own intellectual superiority; perhaps it came in part too from the belief, which he openly expressed after Waterloo, that the finger of God was upon him.[3] It was typical that before Waterloo he told Uxbridge, his second-in-command, that if anything happened to him the battle was lost. Yet although Wellington undoubtedly had good reason to keep his own counsel and to mistrust his subordinates, it would nevertheless appear that he erred in this direction. A few words of explanation at the time orders were given would often have assisted the operation to go more smoothly. Human nature being what it is, men generally like to know not only *what* they have to do but also *why* they have to do it.

If Wellington mistrusted his own senior officers, he was even more doubtful of the capabilities of his allies, and with even better reason. Never a good dissembler, he was quite unable to disguise his feelings towards the Spaniards and the Portuguese, but the transparent honesty of the man, quite as much as his undoubted ability, made it possible for patriots to co-operate successfully with him throughout the war.

The Principles of War in the Peninsula

The officer who examines the Peninsular War to obtain a better knowledge of his profession will naturally wish to relate these campaigns to the accepted principles of war, and in doing this will seek to find, not so much merely examples of the principles in action (for these by themselves, after all, are of little practical value), but rather additional illumination by which the principles may be better understood.

Selection and Maintenance of the Aim

We have already mentioned Wellington's adherence to the so-called "Master" principle of the Selection and Maintenance of the Aim. To defeat Napoleon it was necessary to subject the Napoleonic system in Europe to strains which it could not indefinitely endure, and nowhere could this be done more conveniently or cheaply than in the Peninsula. For nearly six years Wellington, in co-operation with his Spanish and Portuguese allies, was able to engage some 250,000 French troops, a drain on French resources which in the end proved decisive. Thus, in a sense, the liberation of Spain and Portugal from the invaders was merely a by-product of the greater design for the overthrow of Napoleon. The aim in this case was determined by political as much as by military considerations, but Wellington, as the commander of the forces in the field, exerted great influence in the selection of the aim and was instrumental in maintaining it through all the various vicissitudes of the war. He saw clearly what he had to do and was steadfast in the pursuit of his goal.

Looking back now, it may appear to have been a relatively simple calculation. If Napoleon could not subdue Spain, he could not maintain his system in Europe. A British expeditionary force, properly handled, supplied by sea, and aided by the local inhabitants, could prevent Napoleon from subduing Spain. Therefore the British could, by operations in this theatre, break Napoleon's domination of Europe. However, the simplicity of this logic is perhaps deceptive. The thousand difficulties and objections which would have occurred to a contemporary have been dispelled for us by Wellington's victories. Yet for a very considerable time only Wellington had the insight to see the true aim of British strategy and the faith to persevere in it.

The French, on the other hand, never in fact had a single clear-cut aim to guide their overall policy in the Peninsula. They did indeed intend to subdue and occupy the country, but the rivalry and jealousy of the French marshals, their diverse ambitions, and their unwillingness to subordinate themselves to

King Joseph prevented this aim from being consistently followed. The French failure property to observe this indispensable principle of war accounted more than any other single factor for their inability to crush the small British Army and win peace in Spain.

Maintenance of Morale

In spite of occasional disorders such as occurred at Badajoz and San Sebastian, morale in the British Army in the Peninsula was almost always good under Wellington. The army, like a spirited and high-strung horse, recognized the touch of its master on the reins and soon came to place its entire confidence in Wellington's leadership. This instinctive feeling of confidence in the commander was, of course, increased immeasurably by each successive British victory. After the British Army's first few brushes with the French, it soon arrived at the justifiable belief that it was the better force. It was superior in training, in musketry, and in tactics, as well as in leadership, and this superiority increased rather than diminished as the war progressed. Moreover, the British regimental system encouraged pride in the unit and a healthy spirit of emulation, while on the other hand British morale was never strained as was that of the French by starvation, mismanagement, and defeat.

On the whole, however, French morale was also good throughout much of the Peninsular War. Especially in the earlier years, the French soldiers in Spain took a fierce pride in belonging to the Grand Army which had conquered at Austerlitz and at Jena. The French veterans knew that their Emperor was a military genius and, as was proved on a hundred battlefields, they were always willing to lay down their lives for him. This high initial morale, however, was increasingly subjected to almost unbearable pressures, the most important of which was undoubtedly the ceaseless guerrilla warfare waged by the Spanish people. In Spain, death in its most dreadful forms faced the French soldier, not only on the battlefield but also from behind every hedge, on every lonely stretch of road, and in every inn and farmhouse of the realm. Furthermore, the example set by senior French officers was far from good. Their intrigues, their predilection for lining their own pockets with loot, and their mutual quarrels were all reflected in a loss of confidence on the part of the rank and file. There was a saying current in the Grand Army that Spain was "the fortune of the general, the ruin of the officer, and the death of the soldier", and there was much bitter truth in this. Then, too, as time went by and as the shadows lengthened on the Napoleonic dream of empire, the proportion of veterans in the French armies in Spain continually decreased. Throughout the six years of war the French suffered average

casualties of 100 men a day in Spain, and more and more the "old moustaches" were replaced by young conscripts who were inadequately trained and who had no personal memories of the great victories of the past. The constant defeats which the French suffered at the hands of the British also did much to depress their morale and shake their confidence. By the end of the war, as we have seen, the French fighting spirit was very much weaker than it had been at the beginning.

Offensive Action

Throughout almost all of the Napoleonic Wars, the French were the great believers in offensive action. Under the Emperor it could hardly have been otherwise. Yet in the Peninsula every time the French attacked in a major battle they were bloodily repulsed. These persistent defeats had their inevitable effect. After Talavera, Busaco, Albuera and Fuentes de Oñoro, the French offensive spirit was at last broken. From 1812 on, it was Wellington who took the offensive at Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, Salamanca, Vitoria, and in the Pyrenees. Wellington thus recognized that it was not possible to win wars by defensive measures alone, and the criticism that he was only "a defensive general" is seen to be invalid. What is not so often recognized is that Wellington displayed the offensive spirit even in the earlier years of the Peninsular War. At Oporto, of course, his lightning attack on Soult freed Northern Portugal, but more significant is the fact that even when Wellington stood tactically on the defensive he was usually strategically on the offensive. He continually adopted positions so challenging that the French were forced to attack him in the attempt to drive him out. Indeed, the very presence in the Peninsula of the British expeditionary force was strategically an offensive move. The campaign which culminated in the defensive battle of Talavera, for instance, was strategically offensive in nature, as were those which brought on the battles of Vimiero and Busaco.

Security

The British Army in the Peninsula was able to operate with a very considerable measure of security because of the safety and reliability of its seaborne communications. The French on the other hand were dependent upon the single great road which ran from Bayonne through Vitoria and Burgos to Madrid, and this road was constantly being cut by guerrillas. The British too always advanced through friendly territory, while the French moved in a hostile wilderness where their every move was spied upon, their every straggler murdered, and their every convoy constantly threatened. Wellington, who placed great emphasis on the principle of security,

steadfastly refused to advance until the vulnerable points on his lines of communication had been adequately protected. Thus in order to guarantee the possession of a firm base in Portugal he built the Lines of Torres Vedras; he refused to be drawn into Spain until the hostile fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz had been reduced and garrisoned with allied troops; and similarly he refused to press on into France before the fortresses of San Sebastian and Pamplona had been taken. In contrast, the French, by the very nature of things, could find no security in Spain. They held the ground which they could cover by fire and no more.

Surprise

Since surprise is achieved by presenting the enemy with an unexpected and potentially dangerous situation likely to throw him psychologically off balance, this principle is, in a sense, the converse of the principle of security. Wellington, who paid so much attention to security, was never really surprised in the Peninsula, although the unexpected strength of the Salamanca forts and of Burgos perhaps came near to doing so. Yet time and again the British commander caught the French off balance by the unexpected nature of his moves and dispositions. Junot received the first rude shock at Vimiero when he ran headlong into the tactical surprise of British infantry concealed behind reverse slopes. This particular surprise was one of which Wellington never tired and to which the French never failed to respond. At Busaco, Albuera, Fuentes de Oñoro, and finally at Waterloo the tactical surprise of concealed infantry lines was decisive. Yet it was by no means the only trump in Wellington's hand. Masséna, experienced old soldier though he was, was badly shaken the morning he first saw the Lines of Torres Vedras. He was later to tell Wellington: "You turned every hair on my body white."[4] At Oporto Soult was surprised by the audacity and swiftness of a sudden daylight attack across a wide deep river. At Salamanca Marmont was surprised by the swift counterstroke of an army which he believed to be in full retreat. And at the Bidasoa the French were surprised when the British easily crossed what had been considered an impassable obstacle. It is noteworthy too that at both Badajoz and San Sebastian, where surprise could not be achieved, British casualties were terribly heavy. At Badajoz, indeed, it was only the forlorn hopes of the escalades at the Castle and at the bastion of San Vincente which won the day after the anticipated attacks on the breaches had failed with such loss.

Concentration of Force

Wellington's manœuvres in the Peninsular War provide what is probably one of the best illustrations of the principle of concentration of force to be found in military history. Time and again the strategical situation forced Wellington to divide his army and face the French on both his southern and northern fronts. Yet on each occasion he was able eventually to leave merely a containing force on one front while he concentrated the bulk of his army on the other for a decisive blow. It was a game of which he never wearied and at which he was invariably successful. Only once, when he lingered too long in front of Burgos, were the French able seriously to threaten him under these conditions, and even here he managed to reunite his army in time and make good his escape. Although the French in the Peninsula overwhelmingly outnumbered the British, they were never able to concentrate the 100,000 men which Wellington believed would be necessary to drive him out of the country. Yet with only some 40,000 British troops, Wellington, by judicious concentrations at the decisive time and place, was able to achieve the miracle of forcing a quarter of a million Frenchmen to evacuate Spain.

Economy of Effort

The principle of economy of effort implies the ability so to expend the disposable military resources as to make the best possible use of them in effecting a decision. This of course is exactly what the French in Spain so signally failed to do. The more territory the French had to hold down, the weaker they were at any given point. The greater part of their large armies in Spain were continually tied up in garrisons which were always more or less beleaguered. The action of the Spanish guerrillas effectively prevented a succession of French commanders from economizing their forces so as to strike a decisive blow. The British on the other hand were compact and ready, prepared at short notice to take advantage of any favourable opportunity to inflict a defeat on the overextended and scattered enemy.

Flexibility

The inability of the French to achieve economy of effort necessarily limited their flexibility most seriously. The British Army, primarily because of its seaborne communications but also because of the excellence of its supply service and because of the mental attitude of its commander, was able to move almost at will, adapt itself readily to altered conditions, and take advantage of fleeting opportunities. Wellington's refusal to entertain grandiose strategical designs was the mental counterpart of his army's tactical and administrative flexibility. He once commented that the French

marshals “planned their campaigns just as you might make a splendid set of harness. It looks very well, and answers very well, until it gets broken; and then you are done for. Now I made my campaigns of ropes. If anything went wrong, I tied a knot and went on.”[5] Thus the first two attempts to capture Badajoz were made on the off-chance that they might be successful. If they failed, as they did, Wellington would not be seriously disconcerted, for his policy was to exploit the situation of the moment for what it was worth, without at the same time risking any major reverse. If the rope broke, he merely tied a knot and went on. When he thought the French might be hustled out of Spain by a series of left hooks towards Burgos, he hustled them, although the decision to do so was actually delayed until he heard the explosion in Burgos Castle. The most dramatic example of all, perhaps, was that when he judged the time to be right, he transferred his main base from Portugal to the Bay of Biscay. The real point to note, however, is that for Wellington no plan was sacrosanct. He did the best he could as he went along, keeping his mind open and his assets liquid—and that surely is the real meaning of the principle of flexibility.

Administration

Wellington had learned the vital importance of supply and transport in India, and thus he perhaps had an advantage over generals who were used to fighting in the countries of Western Europe north of the Pyrenees. Certainly Wellington paid minute attention to administrative detail. Anyone who reads his *Dispatches* must be impressed by his grasp of matters concerning finance, transportation, supply and medical arrangements. In his correspondence he speaks far more frequently of kettles, dollars, biscuits, shoes, blankets, carts and the like than of tactical or strategical matters. This emphasis on administration was a major factor in his success, for never after the Talavera campaign was the British Army seriously handicapped in operations by an administrative breakdown. There were some shortages on the retreat from Burgos but these were not serious, and a French Army at almost any time in the Peninsular War would have considered itself lucky to have been supplied as well as the British were in this, the worst of their campaigns.

In contrast, the French, accustomed to fighting in more fertile lands and to living off the country, frequently starved to death in Spain where this practice simply was not feasible. The horrors of Masséna’s retreat from before the Lines of Torres Vedras provide only the most severe example of the breakdown of French administration. More seriously, the French were limited in all they did by exigencies of supply. Marshal Marmont expressed

this perennial French difficulty very well when he said that a French commander in Spain was like a shepherd who had to move his flock from the pasturage when it had eaten up all the grass. The chief reason why the French could never concentrate the 100,000 men required to clear the British from the Peninsula was that so large a force could not be supplied and fed.

Co-operation

Again, when we come to consider the principle of co-operation, we find a striking contrast between British and French methods in the Peninsula. The entire strength of the British position was based upon co-operation with the Royal Navy, while scarcely less important was the co-operation which existed between the British Army and the Portuguese and Spanish auxiliaries who fought under Wellington's command. In the early stages of the war especially, this co-operation with Britain's allies left much to be desired, as the Talavera campaign so clearly demonstrated. Nevertheless some of the most important operations of the war would have been impossible without the active co-operation of guerrilla leaders or semi-independent Spanish commanders who co-ordinated their plans with Wellington's. Thus, three years after Talavera, the Salamanca campaign was only made possible by the active participation of various Spanish forces in Wellington's overall plan. Occasionally there were faults of co-operation on the part of Wellington's subordinate commanders, but on the whole the major detached operations went smoothly. Certainly whenever Hill or Graham commanded the detached force, Wellington could rest assured that his general directives would be intelligently and forcefully carried out.

The French marshals, on the other hand, made virtually no attempts to co-operate with one another. Soult was probably the worst offender in this regard, but Bessières, Ney, Suchet, and St. Cyr were all guilty of flagrant lapses. Napoleon himself cannot be absolved from blame in this matter, for he seemed at times almost to welcome competition rather than co-operation from his marshals. Certainly he refused to support King Joseph's authority as he should have done or alternatively to appoint a Commander-in-Chief until it was too late for this move to be effective. The divided counsels of the French were an extremely important factor in bringing about their defeat in the Peninsula.

The Peninsular War and the Downfall of Napoleon

In assessing the place of the British Army in the Peninsula War, it is an obvious fact that, if it had not been for that army, the French could not have

been driven from Spain. Time and again Wellington defeated the French forces in the field, and by his success he kept the Spanish guerrillas active. Finally, at Vitoria, he forced Joseph to abandon his kingdom. Yet when all this has been said, it remains true that the Spanish people were the real heroes of the war. The Spaniards prevented any reasonable system of French communications; they kept the French dispersed in garrisons; they engaged more French troops and inflicted more casualties than the British. It was their ferocity and their persistence which, as much as Wellington's victories, finally destroyed French morale. So the verdict must be that the British could not have won without the Spaniards, any more than the Spaniards could have won without the British.

For long periods in the Napoleonic Wars, Britain, Spain, and Portugal were France's only opponents, and of these three, of course, it was always Britain who was the principal foe. Thus when France desperately needed peace there was always one enemy who stood fast for war. And this inability of the Emperor to make peace was what finally overthrew him. Napoleon's failure in Spain gave encouragement to all the oppressed peoples of Europe, while the victories of Salamanca and Vitoria certainly hardened the resolve of the Allies to insist on the abdication of the Emperor. The burning of Moscow and the Russian 'scorched earth' policy in 1812 were only a repetition, on a larger scale, of the Spanish and Portuguese methods of resistance, while the terrorism instituted in Germany in 1813 by von Lützow's Night Riders was no more than an imitation of what the Iberian peasants had been doing ever since 1808. Besides these considerations, there was the actual drain of the Peninsular War on French resources. If, when he crossed the Niemen in 1812, Napoleon had had with him the veteran troops then fighting in Spain, the story of that campaign might have been very different. Again in 1813, if the Emperor could have had the troops which were tied up south of the Pyrenees, he might have been able to perpetuate his rule. By 1814 Napoleon was almost a general without an army, and even then he did miracles. If he could have had the men of the armies of Spain, who can say what the results might not have been? Thus, in assessing the importance of the Peninsular War in the general context of the struggle against Napoleon, it seems only fair to say that the Emperor would not have been overthrown had it not been for the efforts of Wellington and the British Army.

The End of the Story

By the time Napoleon was banished to Elba, Wellington's reputation stood very high, but after the final victory of Waterloo he became for a time

almost a living legend. Britain's prestige in the councils of Europe was certainly higher than it had ever been before or than it has been since, and that prestige rested solidly upon Wellington's victories. Wellington was the man of the hour—more important than Metternich, or the Tsar, or the King of Prussia. And if he did not get his own way quite as frequently as did Talleyrand, he was certainly much more respected.

Yet Waterloo, although it had put an end to the Empire, had not killed the ideas of the Revolution. After the Congress of Vienna, Europe settled down to a period of enforced reaction, but in Britain reform was in the air. Unfortunately, the Duke of Wellington entered politics in a period when changes, which he could neither support nor understand, had become inevitable. And as much by his temperament and his long habit of command as by his unyielding integrity, Wellington was unsuited to the politics of the time. He broke the party which had made him Prime Minister, and the day was to come when the victor of Waterloo was stoned in the streets of London on the battle's anniversary.

Time, however, has a habit of obliterating such passions, and Wellington survived to see his unpopularity wane and his legend restored in a country where the reforms he had dreaded had been unattended by any of the disasters which he had foreseen. The Regency period passed away, a young Queen ascended the throne, and Britain moved forward into a new and different era, the foundations of which, both for good and ill, had been laid in the Napoleonic Wars. The Duke lived to see this era, if not to comprehend it. He survived the great majority of his contemporaries to die in 1852 at the age of 83. With his death, people rightly felt that a link with the past had been broken and that some measure of certitude had passed away. The nation which he had served through such perils and vicissitudes mourned him at the end with sincere respect and deep gratitude. There was, in truth, reason both for the respect and for the gratitude.

Of the others whose names have appeared in this history there is time for only a brief accounting. Moore had been buried at Corunna, and Craufurd at Ciudad Rodrigo. Old General Picton, embittered at never having gained the coronet which, as he said, would certainly have been his if such things were only to be had at the crown of a breach, was killed at Waterloo, along with Norman Ramsay and many another Peninsular veteran. Pakenham and Ross both fell in the United States, the one at New Orleans and the other near Baltimore. Sir Stapleton Cotton and Sir John Hope were elevated to the Peerage. Leith died as Governor of Barbados. Sir John Colborne, later Lord Seaton, came to Canada where he spent eleven years as a governor. Lord

Paget lost a leg with almost the last shot fired at Waterloo, but survived to become a Field Marshal, and to retain his extraordinary vitality until his death at the age of 86. Beresford remained in Portugal as commander-in-chief until the Revolution of 1820 drove him out. He, too, survived to 86 and spent his declining years in a fruitless controversy with William Napier. Graham became Lord Lynedoch, quit the service, founded the United Service Club, and died, much respected, at the age of 95. Lord Hill, the greatest of Wellington's lieutenants, remained in the Army and served as commander-in-chief between 1828 and 1843. He died the following year at the age of 81. Sir Harry Smith, like many other officers of the Light Division, made a name for himself on the far frontiers of the Empire. His Spanish bride, whom he had rescued at the sack of Badajoz, pre-deceased him by eleven years, but appropriately enough left her name to the South African town of Ladysmith, the scene of another British victory in a later war.

Of the fate of the principal French actors in our story something must also be said. Napoleon's exile on St. Helena was an unhappy one, but until his death in 1821 the Emperor spent his time writing memoirs and reliving the great days, so full of memories and regrets. Eighteen of the twenty-six marshals of the Empire had served in the Peninsula. Of these, Lannes had been killed long ago at Aspern-Essling, and in 1813 Bessières had been struck down by a cannon-ball near Lützen in Saxony. Marshal Ney, the hero of the Beresina and the veteran of twenty years of battles, was executed in front of a firing squad, and gallant old Marshal Moncey was imprisoned for refusing to sit on the court-martial. During the Hundred Days, Berthier jumped to his death from a high window in Bamberg when he heard Russian gun-carriages rattling over the cobblestones in the street below and realized that in this last campaign he would not be by the Emperor's side. The flamboyant Murat, who had so ruthlessly suppressed the first insurrection in Madrid in 1808, was shot in Calabria in October of 1815. Wily old Masséna died in 1817, leaving a fortune of forty million francs, a goodly portion of which had been gained in Spain. Mortier was killed in 1835 by a bomb thrown at King Louis-Philippe. Marshal Victor went over to Louis XVIII. So did Marshal Soult, but he changed his mind during the Hundred Days and fought one last time for the Emperor. Five years later he had again insinuated himself into the Bourbon favour and he survived to discuss, as Ambassador to Britain, his old campaigns with Wellington. In 1832, he became Prime Minister of France under Louis-Philippe, in which post he was succeeded two years later by Mortier. In 1847 Soult was created a Marshal-General of France, a rank which has been bestowed only four times

in history—upon Turenne, Villars, Saxe, and Soult. The old marshal died in 1851 at the age of 82.

Marmont was the last survivor of all Napoleon's marshals. He, who had been Napoleon's oldest friend, had betrayed the Emperor in 1814, and with the Bourbon restoration he had become Ambassador at St. Petersburg. Later, when the Bourbons were expelled in 1830, Marmont went into exile in England. While he was there, Wellington took him to visit Woolwich Arsenal where he met the British gunner who had wounded him at Salamanca. The soldier had lost an arm at Waterloo. "*Ah, mon cher*", Marmont remarked, "we all have our turn." His own turn, however, was long in coming. He lingered on, an unhappy exile, until he died in Venice in 1852.

Of the Spaniards we have met, King Ferdinand returned to Madrid in May of 1814, where he promptly vindicated the reputation of his House for learning nothing and forgetting nothing. It is ironical to note that a liberal revolt against this vicious king was crushed in 1832 with the help of the French Army. Victor was then French Minister of War, and Moncey, along with Oudinot, who had never served in Spain before, headed the invading army. The subsequent history of Spain was a deeply disturbed and unhappy one, and in the prolonged civil strife many of the former Spanish guerrilla leaders perished while fighting for one side or the other.

When, in the middle of a December snowstorm in 1840, the ashes of Napoleon were solemnly brought home to the Invalides, only a handful of his veterans were there to greet their Emperor. They were already almost strangers in a strange land, and a new generation of men regarded them with awe but without comprehension. A different Europe was already emerging, and their old battles were now only memories.

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[1] Earl Stanhope, *Notes of Conversations with the Duke of Wellington* (London, 1888), 31.

[2] Davies, *op. cit.*, 87.

[3] Smith, *op cit.*, I, 291.

[4] Stanhope, *op. cit.*, 162.

[5] Sir W. Fraser, *Words on Wellington* (London, 1889), 37.

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TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

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