





# The Fall of NAPOLEON

## THE FINAL BETRAYAL

David Hamilton-Williams

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**DAVID HAMILTON-WILLIAMS, Bt., B.Sc., ARHist.S.** is a respected Napoleonic researcher. His work on the letters of William Siborne—a core element in the research for his first book, *Waterloo: New Perspectives*—is accepted as unique and revolutionary by leading academics in the field. Mr. Hamilton-Williams lives in West Sussex, England.

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**THE FALL  
OF  
NAPOLEON**  
THE FINAL BETRAYAL

DAVID HAMILTON-WILLIAMS

*'Put not your trust in Princes'*  
– Psalms, 146, 1–3



ARMS AND  
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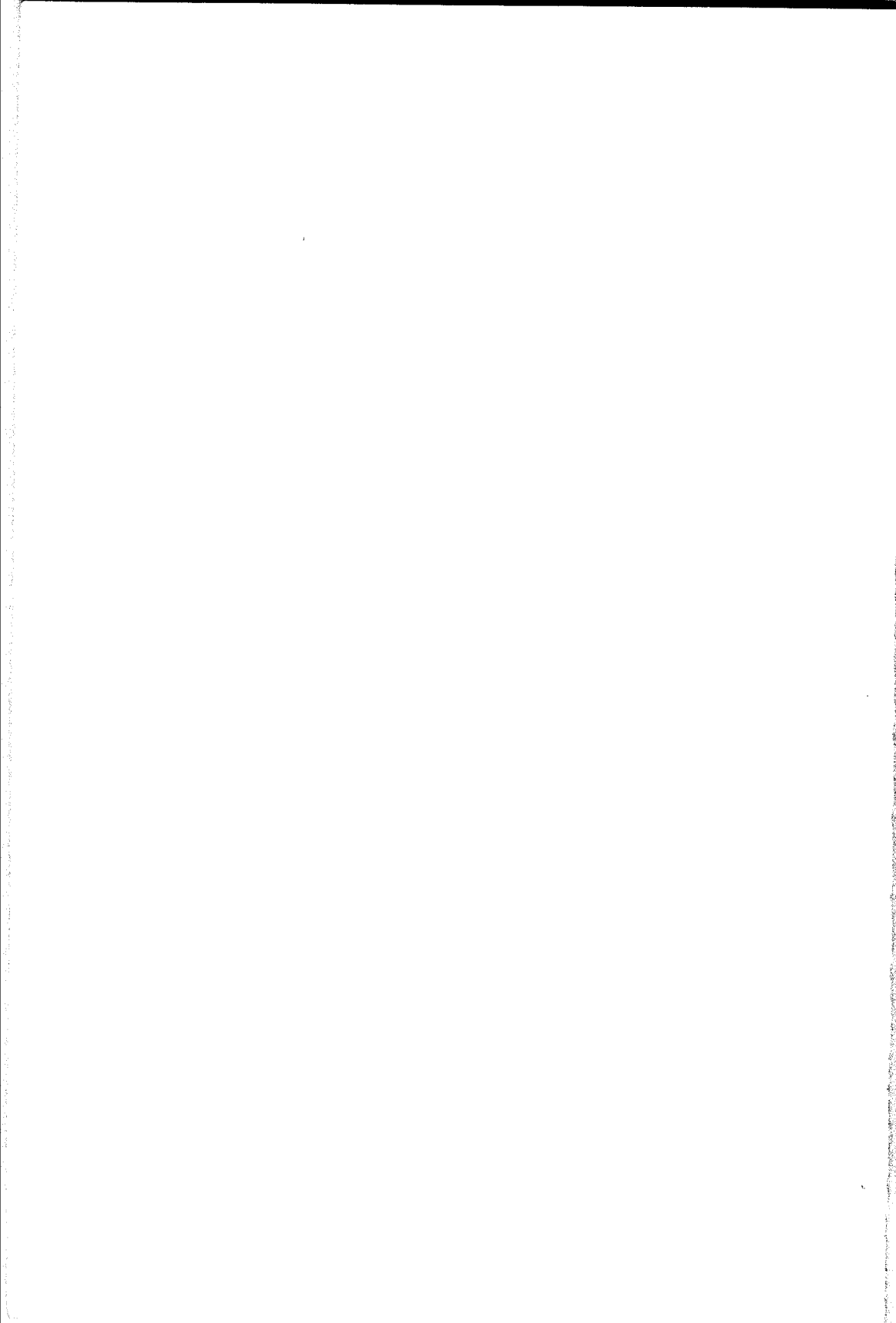
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*This book is dedicated to my wife,  
Sally-Ann,  
for all her love and inspiration*





## PREFACE

*'That war is not a mere act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political activity ... The Political object is the goal, war the means of reaching it, and can never be considered in isolation from that purpose.'* Carl von Clausewitz – *On War*, Book III, 1832

ON AT LEAST SIX OCCASIONS BETWEEN EARLY 1813 AND JULY 1815 Napoleon came within days or hours of inflicting a decisive defeat on the Allies – a defeat that was essential if he were to regain control of the lands of his lost Empire. Had he succeeded, alliances would have been reshuffled and once again he would have dominated Europe. His fall was not brought about by military failure, even at Waterloo, but by a series of carefully orchestrated betrayals. When Napoleon, Emperor of the French, finally abdicated after more than twenty years of unparalleled military and diplomatic successes, France fell once more into a dark age.

Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, together with all the enlightened reforms that the French people had acquired over twenty-five years were abolished. The right to obtain promotion on merit in any profession was restricted. Education for bright children of the lower classes was abolished. Hospitals and homes for invalids and orphans – founded by Napoleon – were closed and the inmates thrown on to the streets. The polytechnics and academies, formerly available to all, became the exclusive preserve of the sons of the old nobility. The *Code Napoléon* – the codification of French law still largely operative today – was replaced by antiquated feudal laws (prescribing mutilation for certain wrongdoers, and even the death sentence for sacrilege) that had been banned by the revolutionary government.

For three years France was occupied by several Allied armies, that had plundered and raped, and bled the nation of massive war indemnities. The people were living under a fanatical totalitarian regime, suggestive of a modern police state, its leaders, knowing that they were detested and unwanted, attempting to control the nation by terror.

Did the French nation, groaning under such suffering, blame Napoleon as the author of their misfortune? Did they loath the man who had been a 'Tyrant', a 'Usurper', and who had thrown away the hundreds of thousands of lives of husbands, sons and fathers? For if we are to believe all that was written about this man, we must assume that such a bloodthirsty tyrant's memory was execrated by the mass of the people. This was not the case. In 1815, on Napoleon's return, the entire nation — not just the army, but the nation in arms – put the country into a state of readiness to defend him and their rights which they had purchased at the cost of so much blood during the Revolution.

History, it has been truly said, is written by the victors. After his exile in 1815 – and subsequent murder – it was inevitable that Napoleon's colossal achievements and ultimate failure should enter the realm of mythology. The process was scarcely hindered by the Bourbon kings of France who lucratively encouraged respected 'literary' authors to perpetuate their mortal enemy by means of a 'black legend' whose constant iteration by modern writers has led to almost universal acceptance.

For instance, in 1814 Napoleon is exiled to Elba but escapes. This was not the case. One does not provide a prisoner with a frigate and a bodyguard of 1,200 armed men, plus about 200 cannon and sovereignty of an impregnable island fortress. Again, in 1814, Napoleon is beaten by the 'law of numbers'. Here the mythology advances as irrefutable fact the supposition that, facing 800,000–1,000,000 men, he must inevitably be defeated. This specious premise relies for plausibility on a single determining factor: that the Allies were working in harmony and with a single war aim. Such was not the case. Three months before Napoleon's return, England, Austria and Bourbon France had signed a secret treaty to support one another in a war against Russia. The Tsar, apprised of this in 1815, had no intention of marching to attack Napoleon, nor had his father-in-law, the Emperor of Austria; they did not move against him until *after* he had been defeated at Waterloo.

Napoleon's fate had been decided by William Pitt in 1800. A secret memorandum written by Lord Nelson warned him that Napoleon's occupation of Antwerp meant that he could cross the North Sea and effect a landing close to London at almost any time during the months of September to March; if, for example, the Royal Naval blockading ships were dispersed during a gale, the estimated time of twelve hours to re-assemble would be sufficient for a flotilla of landing-craft to get across. (This information was considered so secret that its release was not authorized until 1904.) Henceforward the British Government was determined to eliminate Napoleon at any cost and by any means. To this end a secret organization headed by the comte d'Artois, heir to the Bourbon throne, was established in the island of Jersey. Accredited to King Louis, it was funded with forged currency by the Bank of England and the British secret service, supplied with arms and equipment, and operationally controlled by a British admiral – who happened to be a sovereign prince of France. On Bourbon assurances that Paris could be rendered indefensible, unlimited funds to that end, laundered through Austria, were provided by the organization, Parliament being kept in the dark.

It is unfortunate that, in military circles at least, a tradition has been perpetuated wherein Napoleonic history is compartmentalized into tidy segments: the 1812 campaign; that of 1813; 1814; 1815. While this may be convenient for the writer or lecturer, it has the tendency to dislocate continuity. After all, throughout the period politicians did not cease to negotiate, political aims did not change, policy was not suspended. My book begins after Napoleon's return from Moscow in 1812, the military and political implications and social policies being portrayed against the historical background of his resurgence, and Britain's determination to oppose him *à outrance*, and ends with his murder in 1821. Thus the reader can compare the political

and military objectives of all the participants in tandem, and re-evaluate them accordingly – and, I hope, come to realize the significance of Clausewitz's maxim quoted above.

I use the term 'murder' advisedly. Not 'natural causes', not 'assassination', not 'execution'; but cold-blooded murder out of political necessity. I cannot claim credit for this discovery which must go to Dr Sten Forshufvud and Ben Wieder, but I believe that I have uncovered conclusive proof to corroborate their findings.

At the time of completing this book (June 1994), Professor Maury of Montpelier University has announced to the world via the *Washington Post* that he is in possession of the comte de Montholon's written confession to the murder of Napoleon by arsenical poisoning. Strands of the Emperor's hair have been sent to the FBI's forensic laboratory to undergo tests identical with those already carried out in the Department of Forensic Medicine at Glasgow University. During his last days, it should be noted, Napoleon was exhibiting 31 of the 33 clinical symptoms of arsenical poisoning.

During ten years' research for my first book, I examined the original primary sources for Waterloo, including the celebrated 'letters' of Captain William Siborne. He had used this same material as a basis for his History of the campaign which became the primary source for our later histories. Profoundly shocked to find that his History had been fabricated, I extended my research to the much-neglected archive material, and spent several years examining all the Foreign Office, Colonial Office and Cabinet and State papers for the period 1812 to 1815. My discoveries changed my view of Napoleon and of the conflict in general.

In the same way that the concept of social reform reached France after the War of American Independence, so now it was crossing the Channel. The British people, having been at war for nearly a quarter of a century and isolated from France, were suddenly becoming aware of the ideas that had been current there. Napoleon, alive on St. Helena, was seen by the privilege-based governments of Europe to be as great a threat as he had been when at the height of his powers, and fears of a French-style revolution in Britain prompted the hasty passing of Draconian laws.

In all honesty, one can only describe as shameful the contemptible clique who ran the British Government of the time; ruthless nonentities, so despised that only the corrupt parliamentary system (that saw little change until 1831) enabled them to cling to office, and whose malefactions could scarce be redressed by the honourable conduct of such as Major-General Sir Robert Wilson, Sir Francis Burdett and the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Ellenborough. A corrupt government whose foreign minister 'went rogue' and nearly committed Britain to a war with Russia on his own behalf, this being averted only by a deliberate government leak to the Russian Ambassador. Bribery, corruption and terrorism, all were brought into play in the endeavour to be rid of Napoleon and enable themselves to remain in power. They deceived Parliament, suspended Habeus Corpus and, during a period of nine years, transported 78,000 Britons (a greater number than fought at Waterloo) to Australia – most of the more politically radical being convicted as felons on trumped-up charges.

PREFACE

Although, when considering the events of the Napoleonic, or for that matter any other, era, there is usually ample cause to apportion blame for acts of commission or omission, particular odium seems to attach to the House of Bourbon. The reign of this dynasty was founded upon an act of betrayal by Henry of Navarre who, to secure the throne, renounced for a second time the Protestant faith he had intermittently championed during the French religious wars. For two centuries before the Revolution, he and his progeny had battered parasitically on the vigorous body of France. Of the two remaining scions of the House during the period covered by this book, Louis Bourbon, comte de Provence, who twice became Louis XVIII by the will of the British Cabinet, lacked both the intelligence and the courage to be truly evil, while his brother Charles, comte d'Artois, later Charles X, possessed in full those qualities of will and turpitude that made him a mortal danger to those he decided were enemies, and a malignant blight on his subjects.

One cannot but admit to feelings of abhorrence for these men who were, during this twilight of the Age of Reason, the principal and most repugnant exponents of an atavistic tendency among those at the summit of the moribund feudal society of France to try to restrict the growth of individual freedom which their countrymen had enjoyed in greater measure under Napoleon than they had known since the time before Caesar set his defiling foot on their fertile soil.

History has yet to record her final judgement on Napoleon, and it is to be hoped that the new evidence offered here will change perspectives, and put her in a better position to do so. I make no claim to have composed a literary masterpiece, but having acquired this, in my judgement, historically important information, I have laid a historical ghost that has haunted me, and which would have continued to do so until I exorcized it by revealing it to others. In so doing I hope that I have succeeded in presenting the phenomenon that was Napoleon in such measure that the reader will understand why it was that the French people were willing to die for him in their hundreds of thousands, and continued to honour him during his years of exile, while they yet suffered at home under years of foreign occupation and a repressive domestic regime.

D. C. Hamilton-Williams, June 1994

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Sadly, many great friends and authorities have died since the inception of this work: notably Brigadier Peter Young, whose generosity and knowledge he freely imparted. Likewise, Major-General B. P. Hughes on weaponry, and Michael Glover who gave me advice about Napoleon's marshals in the Peninsula.

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D. C. H-W., July 1993

