

# NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

ALAN SCHOM

*Author of One Hundred Days and Trafalgar*



# NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

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A L A N   S C H O M



HarperPerennial  
*A Division of HarperCollinsPublishers*

*To the memory of Stefan Zweig (1881-1942),  
who cherished and worked for a vision of Europe  
far different from that of Napoleon.*

*And to Emile Zola (1840-1902),  
who gave his life to the struggle for historical truth.*

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Praise for

# NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

"Superb. Mr. Schom has achieved every historian's dream; using exemplary scholarship to write a page-turning bestseller."

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# NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

ALSO BY ALAN SCHOM

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*One Hundred Days: Napoleon's Road to Waterloo*

*Trafalgar: Countdown to Battle, 1803-1805*

*Emile Zola, A Biography*



ALAN MORRIS SCHOM was born in Sterling, Illinois, in 1937, and educated in California and England. Holding a doctorate in modern French history, he taught at university for several years before devoting himself full-time to research and writing. He is the author of several works including *Emile Zola, A Biography*; *Trafalgar*; *One Hundred Days: Napoleon's Road to Waterloo*; and his present work, the first volume of *Eagle and the Rising Sun: A History of the Japanese-American War, 1941-45*. He has written two reports for the Simon Wiesenthal Center on Swiss pro-Nazi activities during World War II. In addition he has appeared on the BBC and American radio and television programs. He has given guest lectures at Oxford University in England. A sailor and farmer, he and his Scottish terrier spend their time between France and the United States.

# Europe in 1789, Before Napoleon; and in 1814, Before His Defeat at Waterloo









*Emperor Napoleon, December 2, 1804. Portrait by Maurin, lithograph by Delpech.  
(Dawson Collection, Morrab Library of Penzance)*

*Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus, and we petty men  
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about  
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.  
Men at some time were masters of their fates.*

—SHAKESPEARE, *JULIUS CAESAR*

*... I may truly say, my soul hath been a stranger in the  
course of my [life's] pilgrimage.*

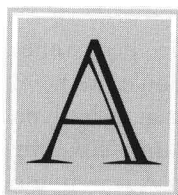
—FRANCIS BACON

*Napoleon's empire, with all its faults, and all its glories, fell  
and flushed away like snow at Easter till nothing remained  
but His Majesty's ship Bellerophon which awaited its suppli-  
ant refugees.*

—SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL

## P R E F A C E

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A few weeks before our arrival [at Borodino in September, 1991], a peasant with a horse-drawn plow snagged two corpses just under the surface. One of them was a general, the other an infantryman," Baron de Méneval wrote me on February 26, 1996. The corpses were facing the former Russian position. The general was either Compère or Marion, both of whom were killed during that battle. The infantryman's skeletal hands were still grasping the rusting remains of his musket and bayonet. The guide at the Borodino Museum informed the baron that over the past few decades they had uncovered several dozen such human remains dating back to September 7, 1812. When visiting Eylau in September 1993, my friend the baron came across another newly discovered corpse—all of which reminds us just how close we are to the historical events of the past. We may sometimes try to forget history, but it does not forget us.

History has always fascinated me, but not the lifeless presentation of events of former times reduced to the dates of the reigns of kings and of battles and treaties—all but devoid of human association, of the men and women who actually created those events, and of the entire circumstances surrounding them. To correct such a myopic view and presentation one must introduce a sense of reality and understanding—in this case, the *full life* of Napoleon Bonaparte, whom the reader must see as a human being set in his own times. One must include his personal values, family, friends, associates, problems, character, and goals.

When I began my research a decade ago, I was astonished to find there was no one-volume biography covering all aspects of his life. I also found that most existing books tended to concentrate on "pieces" of his life—his military campaigns, or his foreign policy, or his administrative and political reforms—thereby revealing only part of the man. Over the last 150 years there have been thousands of these studies, most of them now out of print.

There have also been thousands of articles about Napoleon and his empire. Needless to say, deciding to set aside several years of my life to undertake such an enormous task as a one-volume biography of an individual about whom there was such a massive amount of primary and secondary research and source material was a decision I did not take lightly.

I began working on Napoleon in the summer of 1987, coming at him at first indirectly, so to speak, with research for my book on his attempt to invade England, concluding with Trafalgar, the great naval defeat of the French and Spanish fleets by Nelson's powerful squadron, which Napoleon only heard about, to his dismay, during the Austerlitz campaign. This was followed by my book on Napoleon's Hundred Days, which covers the period of his escape from exile on the island of Elba in the Mediterranean, his arrival on the south coast of France for a triumphal return to Paris, his raising of a new army to fight the large allied forces congregating against him, and his final battle and defeat at Waterloo.

It was after the completion of *One Hundred Days* that I decided, somewhat reluctantly, to commit myself to covering all of Napoleon's life from beginning to end, not just parts of it. I felt—and still do—that Napoleon badly needed to be dealt with fully and properly in one volume covering every aspect of his life and character, employing all the new research and archival documents.

This undertaking required visits to libraries and other archival sources on the Continent, in England, and in the United States, including the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Quai d'Orsay, and the Naval Museum in the Trocadero in Paris; the French Army and Navy Archives in Vincennes; the Musée Masséna in Nice; dozens of châteaux, including Talleyrand's Valencay, Malmaison, Fontainebleau, Pont de Briques in Boulogne, and Hougemont; public buildings, including in Paris the Conciergerie, the Naval Ministry, the Invalides, the Ecole Militaire, the National Assembly, and the Senate. In Britain I visited Oxford's Bodleian Library, the British Library, and various naval museums. In the United States I worked in the Main Library of the University of California, Berkeley, Yale's Sterling Memorial Library, and Dartmouth's Baker Library.

I also attempted to retrace Napoleon's steps through Egypt, Italy, Spain, throughout the whole of France, including its major ports on both coasts, through the Rhineland and up to Copenhagen, east by train to Berlin and Potsdam, across Bohemia to Vienna and Salzburg, along the Danube to Regensburg and Ulm, thence to Switzerland, and finally to Waterloo in Belgium. It has been a long, arduous, but fascinating odyssey requiring almost every minute of every day.

Being neutral about Napoleon has never been easy for Europeans. To the French he is almost universally a national hero, his excesses overlooked and unmentioned. By most other Europeans, whose ancestors suffered ter-

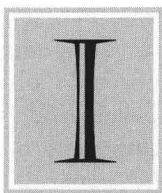
ribly under his conquests, he is, understandably, hated. My view of him is based upon what I found in the course of my research. I have attempted to suppress nothing, and have tried to be as impartial as humanly possible. As an American, whose young country at the time, apart from some minor naval clashes, was neither an enemy nor an ally of Napoleon, I have been able to avoid, I hope, emotional or nationalistic commitment to any one side. Using all I could glean from the French documents and memoirs available, I have endeavored to deal with every aspect of his character and life, whether regarding his private family life; or in the State Council; before diplomatic receptions; or on the field of battle. I have reexamined his many military campaigns, his treatment of those countries and peoples he conquered, his relations with colleagues and subordinates, and his ideas, motives, and performance.

My goal is to provide a balanced insight into Napoleon and his actions. And I hope that my biography will inspire my younger colleagues to undertake the multivolume study this subject so richly deserves and requires.



## A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

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am indebted to many people and institutions for their help or advice over the years, although I should like to emphasize that I alone am responsible for the views expressed, and conclusions reached, in this book. I thank:

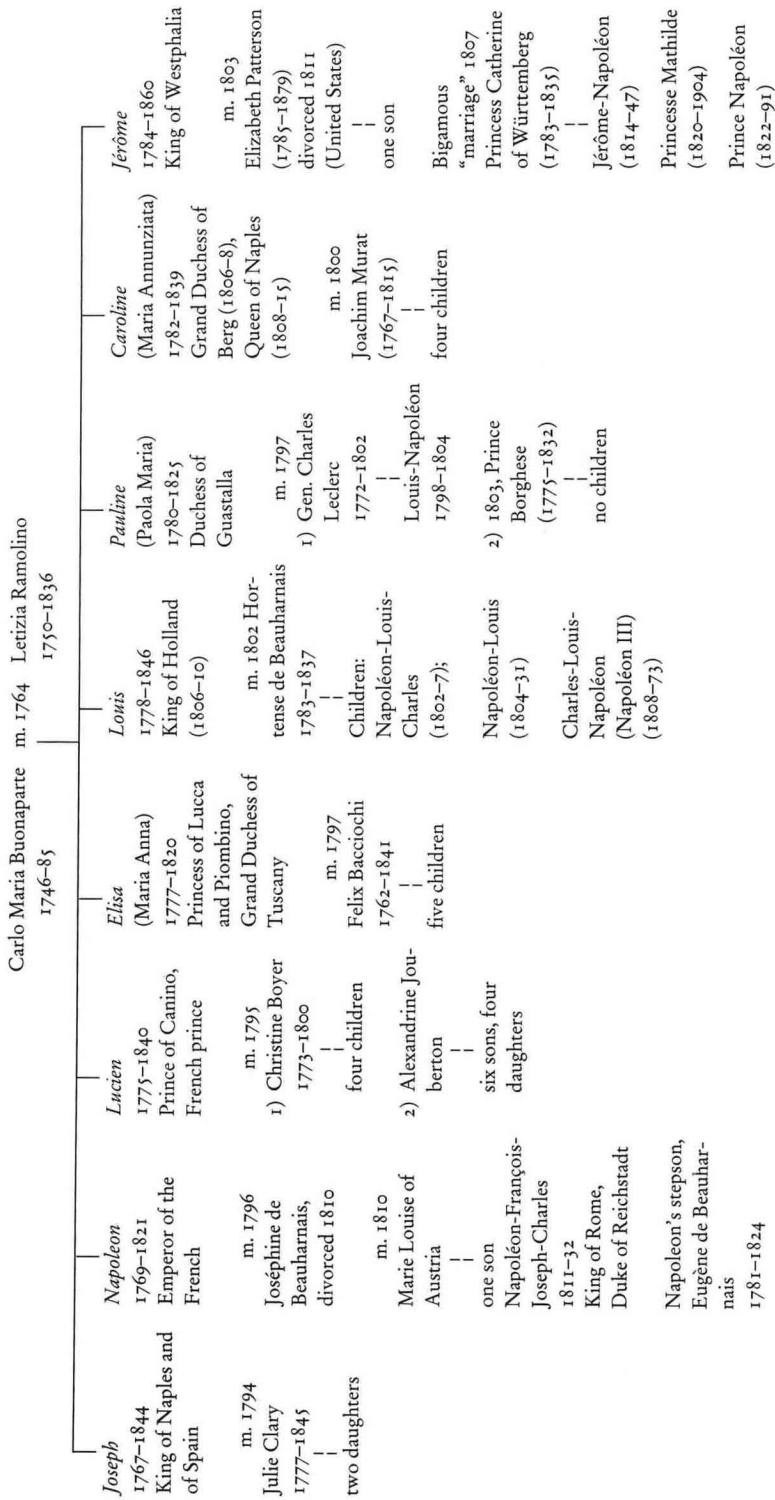
Librarians and archivists at the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the British Library, the Public Record Office, and Dr. Thomas Arkell, chairman of the Morrab Library, Penzance, for the use of many rare illustrations, and, in particular, Mrs. Gillian Green, who spent many hours selecting them; not to mention photographer W. J. Watton, the Hulton Deutsch Collection, for permission for some illustrations; Mr. Ian Robertson, director of the National Army Museum, London, and Miss Lucinda Brown, for permission to use this art gallery as the setting for the author photo; Dr. Lynn Orr and the associate curator of the San Francisco Fine Arts Museum, Dr. Marion C. Stewart; the curators of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, and the Royal Naval Museum, Portsmouth, as well as the faculty and staff of the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, for their unstinting contributions.

In the United States the main library of the University of California, Berkeley, and the Baker Library at Dartmouth, aided me most generously in making available numerous rare first editions. Most of the research and writing, however, were carried out in France, of course, where, in addition to dozens of small museums and châteaux, the scene of events or the property of individuals discussed in this biography, I am much obliged to M. Jacques Perot, conservateur en chef of the Musée de l'Armée, at the Invalides, and to M. Gérard-Jean Chaduc, conservator of the "1789-1871 Department" also at the Invalides, and to the conservateur des Estampes, Musée Carnavalet, Mr. Bernard Chevallier, director of the museum at Malmaison, who patiently answered many questions about that property, while his colleague at Fontainebleau further aided me. I am also grateful to the

curators of the Musée Bonnat of Bayonne; the Musée Masséna in Nice; the Musée de la Marine, Paris; and of the Services Historiques of the Army and Navy at Vincennes. Once again the Bibliothèque Nationale and the splendid new Archives Nationales of Paris proved a godsend. M. Philippe Martial, directeur de la Bibliothèque et des Archives du Sénat was of invaluable help, as were Général de Division Bruno Chaix, French Army (Ret.); Col. J-L. Reynaud (Ret.), and Col. Lawrence S. Burr, OBE, RAOC, at SHAPE. In the fields of science and medicine I was aided by Prof. Roger Hahn, University of California, Berkeley; and Drs. William Jago, F. Barham, and Bruce McCully. I am also indebted to my good friend, a former gunner and regimental commander, John Greenwood, for explanations of the technicalities of his art, not to mention the many books he made available to me from his personal library. Nor can I possibly omit Jeffery Burr, undoubtedly Britain's premier lawyer, for his advice and for making private library facilities available to me. David Chandler, the finest Napoleonic military authority of this century, helped me time and again, as only a very good friend could possibly do. Dr. Piers Branden, director of the Churchill College archives, Cambridge, expedited valuable research in my behalf; and I am grateful to Dr. Thomas Anfält of the University Library, University of Uppsala, Sweden, for his research into the Germaine de Staël papers. I should like to thank Count Alexandre Walewski and M. Jacques Jourquin for their help, and in particular Baron de Méneval, to whom I owe so much. I am grateful to the Prince and Princess Napoléon Murat for a delightful luncheon, Proctor Jones for his inimitable wit and many personal kindnesses, and Dr. Ben Weider for sharing with me the scientific evidence he has gathered concerning the poisoning of Napoleon. Special thanks are due to Byron Farwell for his encouragement. It would be most remiss on my part not to thank Françoise Coménie for her help and many kindnesses over the past several years, and without whose yeoman service, indeed, this book would never have been completed. Finally, I should like to express my special appreciation to my editor at HarperCollins, Buz Wyeth, for his wise counsel and inordinate understanding as the manuscript of this biography expanded far beyond the scope of the original project until it literally towered over his busy desk.

ALAN MORRIS SCHOM  
*Le Bois St.-Laumer*  
*France*

T H E B O N A P A R T E F A M I L Y T R E E



m. 1806 Princess Auguste-Amélie of Bavaria  
|  
seven children