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# War and Peace in Europe from Napoleon to the Kaiser: The defeat of Napoleon, 1806-1815 Transcript

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## WAR AND PEACE IN EUROPE FROM NAPOLEON TO THE KAISER THE DEFEAT OF NAPOLEON, 1806-1815

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In the first decade of the 19th century, the armies of the French First Consul and, from December Emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte, swept across Europe, defeating every coalition of rival powers put together to try and contain them. In 1805 he destroyed an Austrian army at Ulm, in southern Germany, forcing its general to surrender and capturing 30,000 prisoners; six weeks later, he achieved his greatest victory of all, at the Battle of Austerlitz, fought on 2 December 1805 against an allied army of Austrians and Russians, in Moravia. Napoleon proved his tactical skill and daring in this encounter. The two sides were evenly matched, with Napoleon commanding 75,000 troops and the Allies 73,000. Napoleon began by tempting the Allied forces to weaken their centre by attacking his right flank, which he had deliberately left under-strength. His battle plan depended on rushing up reinforcements of 7,000 fresh troops from Vienna under Marshal Davout to strengthen his right while he moved his main force onto the Pratzen Heights, the central ground of the battle. Davout's men arrived after a forced march, and held the right flank, while Napoleon smashed through the enemy centre, then mopped up the enemy forces to the south, before driving the combined allied troops from the battlefield. 15,000 soldiers were left dead or wounded on the allied side, and 12,000 taken prisoner; the French lost 8,000 and nearly 600 taken prisoner. The Austrians recognized the inevitable and signed the Peace of Pressburg on 26 December, giving up many of their territories in northern Italy and southern Germany to Napoleon and his clients. The Holy Roman Empire founded by Charlemagne in 800 and ruled by the Habsburgs with only one short break since the Middle Ages was abolished.

There remained the Prussians to deal with. Appalled by Napoleon's creation of another client state in the shape of the Confederation of the Rhine, and by news of his intention to return Hanover from Prussian to British control in an attempt to buy peace with the United Kingdom, the Prussians declared war in October 1806. Their leading general, Gebhard von Blücher, declared that 'the French will find their grave on this side of the Rhine, and those who make it back home will take with them news of disaster'. The Prussians were over-confident. They managed to mobilize nearly 110,000 men, but Napoleon advanced into Saxony with more than 140,000, whom he had kept in a state of readiness for just such an eventuality. On 14 October 1806 Napoleon and Marshal Davout defeated the Prussians at the twin battles of Jena and Auerstedt. At the latter encounter, Davout had crushed a Prussian force more than twice the strength of his own. The French owed their success above all to Napoleon's quick reactions, his ability to adapt to a rapidly changing situation, the professionalism of his troops and the over-confidence of the Prussians. These catastrophic defeats did not stop the Prussians from fighting on, however, and Napoleon inflicted another massive defeat on them at Eylau on 8 February 1807; on 14 June he beat the Russians at Friedland, forcing them to sign the Peace of Tilsit. Finally, when the Austrians declared war on Napoleon again in 1809, they managed to inflict a defeat on him at the crossing of the Danube at Aspern-Essling before Napoleon decisively defeated them a month later at the Battle of Wagram on 6 July 1809, completing one of the most remarkable series of military victories in modern history.

Napoleon used these victories to redraw the map of Europe, annexing large swathes of it to France, which by 1810 stretched from the Hanseatic cities in the north (renamed the Département des Bouches de l'Elbe) through the Low Countries to north-west Italy in the south. At its height the French Empire covered three-quarters of a million square kilometers and numbered 44 million people as its citizens and inhabitants. He surrounded the Grand Empire with a ring of satellite states, often ruled by his relatives, including the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of Westphalia. Everywhere that Napoleon ruled, he replaced entrenched custom and privilege with the rationality and uniformity, bringing the legacy of the French Revolution into states previously mired in the complexities and contradictions of the ancien régime. While his armies rampaged across Europe, his bureaucrats moved in silently behind, reorganizing, systematizing, standardizing. In the areas it annexed and the borderlands where it established its client states, notably western Germany, northern Italy and the Low Countries, as well as, notably, France itself, a new generation of professional administrators emerged to run things while Napoleon was away waging his never-ending military campaigns. Local and regional jurisdictions, such as those exercised by hundreds of Imperial knights in the Holy Roman Empire, and by church and seigneurial courts, were replaced by centralized uniformity administered by a judicial bureaucracy.

In all these areas, the Napoleonic Law Code replaced existing, often tradition-bound laws and ordinances, introducing a key element of equality before the law, even if in some respects this central principle of the French Revolution had been modified by Napoleon's more conservative outlook on issues such as the rights and duties of women. Property rights were guaranteed wherever the Code applied, as they had not been in many areas before. The Code proclaimed many of the key ideas of the French Revolution, including the freedom of the individual, and, as Napoleon himself proclaimed in his testament, equality of opportunity, 'career open to talent', and 'the rule of reason'. Weights and measures were standardized, internal customs tolls abolished, guilds and other restrictions on the free movement of labour swept away, serfs freed (including in Poland). The state took over the appointment of clergy, and introduced freedom of worship and a measure of equality of rights for non-Christians, notably the Jews. The power of the Church had been drastically reduced, with vast swathes of land being secularized and ecclesiastical states swept off the map. The registration of births, marriages and deaths was assigned to secular authorities. Monasteries were dissolved, and the power of the Church was further

reduced in many areas by the introduction of freedom of religion, civil marriage and divorce, secular education, and the removal of some of the most crass discriminatory measures applied to non-Christian communities such as the Jews.

How did France under Napoleon manage to establish this extraordinary degree of hegemony over Europe? Clearly, although his admirers have always refused to admit it, Napoleon's own undoubted military genius was not the sole cause. At the most general level, it is important to remember that France was the most prosperous, the most advanced and the most populous country in Europe, numbering some 28 million people at the beginning of the 1790s. Around 1810, Britain's population was 12 million, Austria's 19 million, Prussia's 5 million, Bavaria's 3 million, Saxony's 5 million. Russia's population totalled 31 million, but the standard of living and levels of production were far below those of France. Germany was divided into a large number of independent states, over which the Holy Roman Empire had only minimal control. As the Napoleonic Wars showed, the leading states in Central Europe, Austria, Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, generally found it difficult to combine against the French, although going it alone, as both the Austrians and the Prussians discovered, was a recipe for disaster. Between the mid-1790s and the mid-1810s, the Austrians, Prussians and Russians found it more or less impossible to join forces against the French, so that almost to the very end, the various coalitions of powers ranged against them included one or two of the other leading powers in Europe, but not all three. This nullified the potential advantage of their combined superiority of numbers.

The French, both under the Revolution and under Napoleon, were able to draft more men into the army not just because they had more men than most other states to draft, but also because they had already developed under the ancien régime a centralized system of administration that enabled them to do so quickly and efficiently and then train and mobilize them for battle speedily and effectively. On almost every occasion, Napoleon was able to put more troops onto the battlefield than his opponents could manage; when he could not, defeat as often or not was the result. While the armies of Prussia, Austria and Russia were run by generals who owed their position to their aristocratic background, their length of service, and their influence at court, the French armies were commanded by younger men, above all by Napoleon and his marshals, who had earned their promotion through sheer ability, rewarded by the 'career open to the talents' introduced by the Revolution. Losing a battle under the Revolution was no joke for French generals, 84 of whom were guillotined during the Reign of Terror in 1793-4. They were trained in a harsh school, which responded to the invasion of France by counter-revolutionary forces led by the Austrians in 1792-93 with aggressive tactics that carried the battle to the enemy. Napoleon took this attitude onto a new level, repeatedly confounding his opponents with his swiftness and his willingness to attack. Their opponents slowly realized that their tendency to fight defensively, directing their troops round the battle with the elegance, and at the pace, of an eighteenth-century gavotte, did nothing to improve their chances of victory. Even under the ancien régime the French army had decentralized its command, allowing manoeuvrable columns and divisions of men some freedom of action under their own commanders, and thus giving them the capacity to react quickly to fast-moving battle situations. Flexibility and adaptability were a large part of the key to Napoleon's success.

Some contemporaries also considered that French troops were more committed to fighting for their country, as free men, proud of their nation and fired by a fierce belief in the justice of its cause, than the forcibly drafted serfs who provided the cannon-fodder for the Prussians, the Austrians and the Russians. The Hanoverian artillery officer Gerhard Scharnhorst in particular concluded already in 1795 that the enemies of France would need to reform not just their own armies but also their own social systems and hierarchies if they were to beat the French at their own game. It was not until the crushing defeats of Jena and Auerstedt that the Prussians embarked on a wholesale reform of their army and administration, recognizing the inevitable by more or less abolishing serfdom, getting rid of the harshest aspects of military discipline, establishing a series of civil administrative Ministries, including, crucially, a Ministry of War, sacking three-quarters of the generals, and making promotion dependent on merit. The most radical of the reformers aimed for a citizen army like the French, and although this never came, the spread of the French revolutionary idea of nationhood, patriotism and citizenry through significant parts of Europe began to have an impact: the birth of modern nationalism was the result, and it did not bode well for the French. Even the Russians, while still maintaining the autocracy of the Tsar and the central institution of serfdom, embarked on a series of administrative reforms led by Alexander I's modernizing minister Speransky, reorganizing the army, reducing the power of the great landowning nobles, and rationalizing the process of decision-making at the centre.

The Austrians and other European powers never stopped putting coalitions together against the French, and coming back for more after every defeat, because it was clear that Napoleon himself was never going to stop his quest for la gloire, for more victories, more power, more triumphs. Continually redrawing the map of Europe, he humiliated one enemy state after another, detaching huge areas of land from them and assigning them to newly created or redesigned client states, including the Kingdom of Naples, under Joseph Bonaparte, who shortly afterwards was transferred to the throne of Spain, the Netherlands, under Louis Bonaparte, the Kingdom of Westphalia, under Jerome Bonaparte, the Grand Duchy of Berg, under Murat, Napoleon's brother-in-law, and various minor principalities and duchies which Napoleon distributed to more distant relatives. These dynastic moves caused widespread and mounting discontent in the subject nations. In Spain, bandit and guerilla bands started to attack the occupying French troops from 1808 onwards, backed by middle-class politicians who declared a crusade against the atheist French on behalf of nation and religion. By 1813 the guerillas were killing a hundred French soldiers a day, and repression caused mounting resentment and bitterness. In the Tyrol, outraged peasants led by Andreas Hofer rose against the French, who had inconsiderately transferred them

from Austrian to Bavarian rule in 1805, and defeated a combined force of 20,000 French and Bavarian troops in August 1809; the deeply religious insurgents rose in defence of 'God, Emperor and Fatherland', as Hofer proclaimed. Prayers and processions failed to rescue Hofer after Wagram, however; the peasants were defeated, and Hofer was arrested and executed. In Italy, banditry and brigandage spread across the peninsula, and whole towns were raided and pillaged by marauding bands, creating, paradoxically perhaps, the Romantic legend of the brigand celebrated in numerous Byronic poems and French painters and engravers in the 1820s.

Within France, too, war-weariness was beginning to tell, and Napoleon's recruiting agents began to meet with mounting hostility and evasion. Napoleon's victories were costly in terms of men and resources: 8,000 dead at Austerlitz, 7,000 at Jena and Auerstedt, 8,000 at Friedland, 23,000 at Aspern-Essling, 28,000 at Wagram. French casualties were mounting, and alongside the massive losses at the two battles fought in 1809 came the daily seepage of manpower in Spain, combined with the strain of 'imperial overstretch' in an army required to keep the Grand Empire in control of the greater part of Europe. 200,000 men, for instance, were tied down in Spain by the growing guerrilla resistance, at the same time as Napoleon was mustering troops for the battles in Central Europe. So many troops were withdrawn from Italy to serve elsewhere that the peninsula descended into virtual anarchy by the end of 1812. As the French army's recruiters sallied forth yet again into French towns and villages, young men fled to the hills, contracted hasty marriages, or found any means they could to secure exemption. Napoleon was increasingly forced to draft in soldiers from other nations whose commitment to the French cause was correspondingly less reliable. This became painfully apparent when he decided, in 1811, to invade Russia, whose Tsar Alexander I had turned against France partly because of the creation of the French client state of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw on his doorstep, partly because the dependency of Russia on British markets and British trade made the blockade on British ships ordered by Napoleon economically disastrous, so that he refused to implement it from 1810 onwards.

Napoleon's Grand Army, assembled in Germany in the Summer of 1812, included 300,000 French troops, along with 190,000 German, 90,000 Polish and 30,000 Italian. Together with reserves and reinforcements it numbered more than 600,000 men. Once again, it was sheer numbers that counted. The Russians could only muster a third as many. They therefore withdrew, and prudently declined to give battle. In the meantime, the Grand Army began to suffer serious losses through diseases spread in the heat of the Summer. By the time the Russians gave battle, at Borodino on 7 September 1812, behind well prepared defences, the Grand Army was down to less than half its original strength. Napoleon still inflicted a heavy defeat on the Russians, and resumed his march on Moscow, but he had lost 30,000 men killed or wounded in the battle, and the Russians were able to withdraw 90,000 men in good order. When the occupied Moscow, they found the Russians had set it alight, denying the Grand Army the possibility of using it for winter quarters. On 20 October 1812 Napoleon decided to withdraw, realizing that his troops had no means of surviving the oncoming winter. Partisans and guerillas began harassing his troops as they retreated, much as they were doing in Spain. Losses from disease mounted as the weather turned colder. But it was not 'General Winter' that defeated the Grand Army; it was already defeated before winter came. The cold, with the partisans and the pursuing Russian forces, merely completed the rout. By the time the Grand Army got back to Germany, there were only 93,000 left. 370,000 had died of disease or enemy action or hypothermia or starvation; 200,000 had been taken prisoner, including 48 generals. 200,000 horses had died. This was one of the greatest military disasters in history; and it happened above all because Napoleon had no clear objective beyond destroying the main body of the Russian forces, which the Russian general Kutuzov refused to let him do, hopelessly underestimated the vastness of the distances his army had to traverse, and was unable to bring up reinforcements while the Russians had no difficulty in replenishing their own armies.

The retreat from Moscow shattered Napoleon's credibility across Europe. One of the foot-soldiers who survived the retreat, the stonemason Jakob Walter, who lived in the town of Ellwangen in the south-west German state of Württemberg, later described how he and his fellow-troops had experienced the disaster. Constantly harassed by Cossacks, scavenging for food, cold, dirty and hungry, robbed by bandits, and narrowly escaping death on numerous occasions, Walter somehow survived his ordeal. On finding regular quarters, for the first time in many weeks, in a Polish town, he gave himself a wash:

The washing of my hands and face proceeded very slowly because the crusts on my hands, ears, and nose had grown like fir-bark, with cracks and coal black scales. My face resembled that of a heavily bearded Russian peasant; and, when I looked into the mirror, I was astonished myself at the strange appearance of my face. I washed, then, for an hour with hot water and soap.

All attempts to rid himself and his clothing of 'the lice, or rather of my "sovereigns"' proved futile, however. Tramping further westwards with his unit, he began to suffer from a fever, most probably typhus, and had to be carried on a cart the rest of the way. 100 out of the 175 men in his convoy of wagons did not survive the journey. When he reached his homeland, he did not think his relatives would recognise him: 'I made my entrance with a sooty Russian coat, an old round hat, and, under and in my clothing, countless traveling companions, among which were Russians, Poles, Prussians, and Saxons'. Finally he was able to wash properly, dispose of his lice-ridden clothes, and begin the slow recovery of his health. Local people began to greet him 'as a "Russian" as everyone who had been there was called at the time'.

On the way back from Moscow, Jakob Walter at one point had caught a glimpse of Napoleon, sitting down for an al fresco meal near the Beresina River. He was not impressed.

He watched his army pass by in the most wretched condition. What he may have felt in his heart is impossible to surmise. His outward appearance seemed indifferent and unconcerned over the wretchedness of his soldiers; only ambition and lost honour may have made themselves felt in his heart; and, although the French and Allies shouted into his ears many oaths and curses about his own guilty person, he was still able to listen to them unmoved.

All over Prussia in particular, popular resentment now led to attacks on the occupying French forces, and soon Prussia and Russia joined together in a fresh coalition to launch a final assault on the Germans. Artisans and many other ordinary men volunteered to fight, answering a patriotic appeal issued by the Prussian King. Napoleon browbeat a number of German sovereigns, including the King of Saxony, into supporting him, raised a fresh army, and defeated the coalition at the Battle of Lützen on 2 May 1813 and again at Bautzen on 20-21 May 1813. Yet again, however, the French losses, amounting to 22,000 men in each battle, were crippling.

So far the Austrians had stayed out of the coalition, hoping to broker a general European peace. But Napoleon consistently refused. The leading Austrian Minister Clemens von Metternich told him roundly that it was clear there would never be peace while he was in power, that he regarded treaties as nothing more than temporary truces, and that he was now about to be defeated. For the first time since the 1790s, Austria, Prussia and Russia were now in a coalition together, and between them they could muster armies that heavily outnumbered the French and their allies. Using a new, more efficient system of conscription introduced as part of their military reforms, the Prussians put together an army of 272,000 men, while the Austrians contributed 127,000 and the Russians 110,000, with new reinforcements continually making the long journey from the east. After a number of indecisive but bloody engagements, in which the French lost tens of thousands of men, Napoleon, aware that if he retreated, Prussian and other irregulars would harass his army and inflict further losses, stood his ground at Leipzig with 177,000 men on 14 October 1813. The ensuing conflict was justly known as the 'Battle of the Nations', involving as it did French, Germans on both sides, Russians, Poles, Austrians, Hungarians and other nationalities of the Habsburg Monarchy, a rocket-launching unit from the British army, and even 30,000 Swedes contributed by Napoleon's former Marshal Bernadotte, who had turned against the French Emperor.

Not only was he heavily outnumbered, Napoleon was also uncharacteristically indecisive, staying put in and around Leipzig in defensive positions, hoping that the opposing generals would make some mistake on which he could capitalize. While the fighting raged, German forces began to defect from Napoleon's army, including 30,000 Bavarians who were now threatening to cut his line of retreat, and 4,000 Saxons serving in a French army corps who turned round in the middle of an advance and fired their guns at the French forces following behind them. On the first day of the battle, indeed, the Württemberg cavalry had refused to charge the Prussian infantry, saving them from destruction. All of this visibly demoralized the French Emperor. And all the time, Napoleon's losses mounted - 25,000 men on 16th October alone - and soon it was clear that he was in danger of being surrounded. On 19th October he ordered a retreat in the small hours of the morning and departed for Paris. The rout was completed when his rearguard was cut off by the premature destruction of the major river crossing out of the city by a nervous French engineer who panicked at the sight of advancing Cossacks.

Overall Napoleon had lost 73,000 men to the Allies' 63,000, but while they could call on reinforcements, he no longer could. The Allied forces now marched westwards, while Austrian forces moved into North Italy and successfully expelled the French occupiers. Metternich, in the spirit of eighteenth-century cabinet warfare, now urged a compromise peace, but the Prussians in particular, whose position had been greatly strengthened by their prominent contribution to the fighting, won the argument that Napoleon could never be trusted again, and that the aim of the war should be total victory, a doctrine subsequently enshrined in the Prussian officer Carl von Clausewitz's treatise *On War*. They were already in France by the end of 1813.

In the first two months of 1814, Napoleon seemed to be recovering something of his former military skill, attacking separately the invading Prussian and Austrian forces, moving quickly and inflicting on them a series of defeats, notably in the six days' campaign in February 1814. But he was now heavily outnumbered, and in early March 1814 he was defeated by the Prussian general Blücher in the three-day Battle of Laon. At this point, his Marshals recognized the inevitable, and along with his close advisers and the French imperial Senate, they forced him to abdicate on 4 April 1814. By this time, the French had effectively lost the war in Spain, where a British expeditionary force under Arthur Wellesley, created Duke of Wellington in recognition of his successes, had defeated the French under Joseph Bonaparte at the Battle of Victoria on 21 June 1813. Wellington's victory was celebrated in one of the few really second-rate compositions by Ludwig van Beethoven, whose early enthusiasm for the French Revolution and the reforms of Napoleon as First Consul had turned into bitter disillusionment and then patriotic rage, bringing him to cross out the original dedication to Napoleon of his heroic *Third Symphony* and to start using German musical directions on his scores instead of Italian ones.

The British contribution to Napoleon's defeat lay primarily, however, not on land but at sea. Initially, it had looked as if the French could easily stand comparison in terms of naval power with the British, especially since they were able to capture the Dutch and Spanish navies when they occupied these countries, and also acquired the considerable naval forces of the Maltese and Venetians as well. The imbalance was to a degree made good by the Royal Navy's destruction of the Danish navy at Copenhagen, to prevent it falling into the hands of the French, and the massive naval supply stores at Toulon. More importantly, the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic state had little understanding of the sea, and ascribed relatively little importance to naval affairs, while the myth of naval power going back to Sir Francis Drake and beyond played a major role in British strategic thinking. Thus

naval construction and supplies were a low budgetary priority, in strong contrast to the situation in Britain. The British were able to call on reserves of suitable wood on a scale impossible in France, which lacked access to the essential sources of supply, especially in Scandinavia and the Black Sea. British naval administrators were well organized and efficient, while the French naval administration was corrupt and ineffective. High standards of cleanliness and healthy supplies such as the limes that gave the British sailors their nickname - limeys - kept disease on board British ships at far lower rates than on their French counterparts.

Naval encounters heavily depleted French naval manpower, and by 1814 there were 80,000 French sailors in British captivity, while the number of French sailors killed and wounded had reached over 25,000 compared to just over 4,000 for the British. Britain had a much larger deep-sea fishing industry than France from which to man the Royal Navy's fighting ships - often through the crude instrument of the press-gang. The British effectively imposed a blockade of French ports that deprived French sailors and admirals of the experience and training they needed to be effective in battle; thus British gunners in particular could fire and reload at a much faster rate, helped by new, more accurate cannon manufactured in the Scottish ironworks of the Carron Company. French ships were often faster than their British counterparts but had to sacrifice strength and firepower for speed. And crucially, at least for the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the Royal Navy, unlike the army, had a system of promotion according to merit that allowed successful commanders from relatively humble backgrounds like Horatio Nelson to take on senior command positions. This encouraged ambition, boldness and daring, which were reinforced by the confidence bred of a steady stream of successes. By 1815, the British Navy, only one of a range of strong European navies two decades before, had become absolutely dominant in Europe, and British naval supremacy was to remain unchallenged until the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, while Napoleon shut off most of Europe from British trade through his Continental System, the British still had the rest of the world to trade with, above all India and the Americas, while the British command of the seas established at the latest by the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 effectively destroyed French overseas trade. Before 1789, the French economy had been industrializing at a pace not dissimilar to the British, and economic development continued behind the tariff walls erected by the Continental System; but after 1815, when the French economy was exposed to British competition once again, it became clear it had fallen behind, and that continual warfare allied to world trading links and ruthless competition between entrepreneurs had given the British economy a boost that put it far ahead of any European competitors. This too, as in the case of naval cannon, or Congreve's rockets, which caused terror among the French troops at the Battle of the Nations, had its immediate military uses, but in the rest of the century it became clear that it made Britain the world superpower, a factor that had enormous influence in shaping Europe's destiny and its place in the world.

Europe's destiny in particular was what the Allied representatives meeting in Vienna in November 1814 were determined to shape. With remarkable lack of national hatred or recrimination, the Austrians, Prussians, British and Russians included a representative of the French in the negotiations - Prince Talleyrand, who had been Napoleon's Foreign Minister but had switched sides at the right moment and now served the restored French Monarchy. The wars, in the end, were seen as being fought not between nations but between regimes, even, in a way, between ideologies. The restored French monarchy under Louis XVIII, brother of the executed Louis XVI, which refused to compromise with the legacy of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras, and tried to behave as if nothing had changed since 1788, became so unpopular so quickly that when Napoleon returned to France from his enforced exile on the Mediterranean island of Elba on 1 March 1815, he was able to muster 100,000 men in a few weeks, as the provincial administrators, mostly appointed by him, did their job of recruitment, and the areas whose population had benefited most from the Revolution came to his aid. But the Allies quickly deployed 112,000 British, Dutch and German troops under Wellington, who held back the French army at the village of Waterloo on 18th June 1815 until another 116,000 Prussians under General Blücher, whom Napoleon wrongly thought he had defeated at Ligny two days before, arrived at 4 in the afternoon, rescued the British and joined with them in a final assault that drove the French from the battlefield and Napoleon into another enforced exile, this time safely on the remote Atlantic island of St Helena, where he died in 1821. In reality, the outcome was never in doubt; even had Wellington been defeated before the Prussians arrived, Napoleon would eventually have been defeated by sheer weight of Allied numbers.

The Congress of Vienna redrew the map of Europe one more time after all the many boundary changes of the previous quarter-century. The Austrians lost Belgium, but regained all their other territories, and were put in charge of a new 'German Confederation', with much the same borders as the old Holy Roman Empire, but consisting now of 39 states instead of more than a thousand, as it has in the 18th century. Austria gained most of northern Italy and extended its influence into the Balkans. The Austrians, as the immediate winners of the war, were indisputably the dominant European power in the decades that followed it. The Prussians gained territory in the Rhineland, as part of a series of buffer-states intended to contain any future French expansion, including the Kingdom of the Netherlands; in the long run, the economic and later industrial resources of the Ruhr were to provide a major boost for Prussian economic and military power. Russia gained huge swathes of territory, in Poland, Finland, and Bessarabia; the British consolidated their empire while the Spanish and Portuguese lost most of theirs; Malta gave the British another key point in the Mediterranean, while Ceylon, the Cape of Good Hope and Mauritius further secured sea-routes to colonial India. Most importantly of all, the new major European powers, Britain, Russia and Austria, set up a system of guarantees, congresses and mutual support designed to avoid future conflicts and keep the French in check. For their part, the French, after a defeat whose decisiveness could not be doubted, were for the moment disinclined in any case to mount any fresh attempt to conquer Europe. French hegemony, evident since the days of Louis XIV, had been broken; other countries, especially Britain and Russia, who now came in from the periphery to play a central role in European affairs, were much

stronger when they acted in combination, as they were now determined to do. The sheer destructiveness of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, which left more than 5 million dead and large areas of Europe devastated, with towns in ruins from Moscow to northern Spain, were a lesson that all the powers, including ultimately France itself, were determined to learn. How the peace settlement arrived at in 1815 eventually fell apart after the middle of the century, in the wake of the 1848 Revolution, will be the subject of my next lecture.