

**The Defense of the
Napoleonic Kingdom
of Northern Italy,
1813–1814**

*George F. Nafziger
Marco Gioannini*

PRAEGER

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To our wives, Jan and Paola, who, despite the high rates of desertion that affected either party throughout the campaign, stood firm in the ranks, gallantly resisting countless waves of e-mail exchanges and providing us with invaluable logistic and moral support.

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Preface

In 1813 and 1814, while the great armies of Europe fought to determine the fate of a continent, another war was being fought in Northern Italy. The French-Italian army, under Napoleon's stepson Eugène Beauharnais, fought a desperate delaying action against overwhelming odds. Never defeated, Eugène led his army of raw, untrained conscripts over some of the worst terrain in Europe. Covered with glory and undefeated, Eugène was finally forced to surrender by Napoleon's abdication. With the end of this campaign the spirit of Italian nationalism would go underground for nearly 50 years before the numerous Italian states would finally unify and become what we know today as Italy.

The region of Italy in which this campaign was fought was critical in 1796 and 1800 to the fortunes of Napoleon. Major French and Allied armies fought in Germany during those same years, yet the decisive battles were fought on the plains of Lombardy, Piedmont, and Venetia. It is interesting to speculate as to whether the spectacular victories of Marengo, Lodi, Arcole, Castiglione, and Rivoli could have been recreated in 1813 and whether they would have overshadowed events in Germany as they had in 1796 and 1800. The significance of those tiny battles, especially when viewed in comparison with the 1813 standard for a battle, far outweighed the indecisive battles of Germany fought between substantially larger armies. The contrast is even greater as 1796 and 1800 were years of French ascendancy, whereas 1813 and 1814 were years of French collapse.

The comparisons between these four years are strong and striking. In all four years the French armies were significantly outnumbered, they were undersupplied and underequipped, and they fought against superior Austrian armies who had the active support of the British fleet operating against the French flanks. In 1796 and 1814 Genoa was to be the site of a major siege operation. And in

1796, 1800, and 1814 the region around Lake Garda and the Mincio River would see the major battles of the campaign.

Aside from the similarities, there are some striking contrasts. The most obvious was that in 1813–1814 the French were withdrawing before their enemies, whereas in 1796 and 1800 they were advancing against them. In 1796 the Italian states were allied with Austria, and in 1813–1814, with the remarkable exception of Murat's Kingdom of Naples, they were either French departments or part of the Kingdom of Northern Italy, which were allied with France. Of course, a significant change between 1800 and 1813 was that by 1813 the Austrians had abandoned both the purely linear form of warfare and the cordon system, while learning the French system of war and adapting it to their national spirit.

It is also difficult not to compare the two French generals that fought these two campaigns. In 1796 and 1800 the world saw the rising star of a young military genius, Napoleon, snatching victory after victory from his enemies. In 1813 we find Eugène Beauharnais, natural son of a revolutionary French general and adoptive son to Napoleon Bonaparte. Though not an explosive genius like his stepfather, he was a solid general with a good sense of strategy and tactics. Though his army was significantly better than that led by his adoptive father in 1796 and 1800, his enemy was also substantially superior to that faced by Napoleon.

The comparison of son and stepfather is especially striking in 1814 when Napoleon raced around France, a wild and desperate gambler casting the dice at every opportunity with near reckless abandon. Napoleon repeatedly snatched major victories from the Allies, nearly destroying the Army of Silesia in a period of six days and yet a few weeks later barely escaping destruction by judicious retreat.

Eugène, to the south, however, played the conservative game. Playing time and terrain in a brilliant delaying action, he locked nearly twice his numbers in Austrian troops in a theater far from the main theater of action. Not only did he contain and distract this force; he avoided every major effort it made to destroy him and push into southern France.

Eugène's 1813–1814 campaign is more akin to that of the great Roman general Fabius, though he faced no general comparable to Hannibal, than it is to the 1796 or 1800 campaigns of his mentor and stepfather Napoleon.

Eugène Beauharnais's military skills, as displayed in the 1809 Italian campaign, have recently been made the subject of careful examination by Robert M. Epstein in *Prinz Eugene at War: 1809*. In addition to its intrinsic merits, Epstein's work has merit because it goads the reader into comparing Eugène's situation in 1809 to that which he faced in 1813–1814.

The 1809 spring campaign in Northern Italy, and later in Hungary and Austria, was Eugène's first appointment as an independent army commander. In 1805, Napoleon had, in fact, believed that the time was not yet ripe for entrusting the young viceroy of the Kingdom of Italy with the command of an independent army.

In the first phase of the campaign, Eugène paid dearly for his lack of experience and suffered a humiliating defeat at Sacile. As the campaign developed, however, the French commander was able and lucky enough to redeem himself, gaining two important successes on the Piave and the Raab. The latter was a decisive victory, as it prevented Erzherzog Johann from joining his brother Karl in time for the Battle of Wagram. Eugène, on the contrary, did not miss his chance to fight on the plain before Vienna. Eugène's success in the 1809 campaign definitively established his reputation as a reliable, independent commander in the eyes of the emperor.

The Italian campaign of 1809 bears a number of interesting similarities to the 1813 campaign. In 1813, as in 1809, Italy was a secondary theater of war, with the most decisive events occurring north of the Alps. Similarly, in 1809 the outbreak of hostilities saw the French-Italian army taking up a defensive position against an unusually aggressive Austrian army. In 1813, as in 1809, the Austrian plan called for a double-pronged thrust to be delivered from the Illyrian provinces and the Tyrol. In both campaigns, Eugène was in command of a relatively green army, mostly formed of French and Italian conscripts.

However similar these two campaigns might appear, the similarities end here. The differences between the two campaigns are not only longer but also greater in their significance.

The first difference is that in 1813 Eugène had to defend a much vaster extension of territory than in 1809. The Treaty of Schönbrunn, signed at the end of the 1809 campaign, transferred the provinces of the Habsburg Empire on the eastern border of Italy—a portion of Austrian Carinthia and significant parts of modern Slovenia and Croatia—to the French Empire. Napoleon renamed these new territorial additions Illyrian provinces. When Austria joined the Allied coalition in the summer of 1813 and began massing troops on her southern border, the viceroy found himself obliged to watch not only the Alpine accesses to Northeastern Italy but also a relatively wide strip of country on the other side of the Alps. The border stretched eastward from Tyrol following the upper course of the Drava River up to Villach, then ran southeast up to Laybach (Ljubljana) along the upper Sava, including the cities of Karlstadt (Karlovac) and Fiume (Rijeka) at its southernmost end.

A quick look at a modern map clearly shows that holding such an over-extended front running across rough and impervious regions was a much more difficult task than guarding a limited number of passes across the Alps to the Venetian plain.

Despite the fact that Eugène had more territory to defend, the military resources at his disposal in 1813 were not as substantial as they had been in 1809. Not surprisingly, after the disaster of Russia, Imperial Italy and the Kingdom of Italy had been effectively drained of resources to meet Napoleon's incessant demands for more recruits to be sent to the Grande Armée in Germany. The new Army of Italy that the viceroy hurriedly raised in the spring of 1813 would only be strong on paper. As a matter of fact, despite Eugène's tremendous

efforts, the army never approached its expected strength and was desperately short of cavalry. Its green and badly equipped troops, moreover, did not receive adequate training.

In 1809 the French-Italian army in Italy had benefited from a substantial numerical superiority over the Austrians (85,000 to 72,000). In contrast, during the 1813–1814 campaign the Austrian army outnumbered the Army of Italy from the beginning of the campaign, and its strength grew with Murat's defection in January 1814 and the arrival of English forces. By the end of the campaign, the Allied forces in Italy (Austrian, Neapolitans, and British) outnumbered the Army of Italy by a ratio of two to one, or perhaps even more.

In 1813 it was the weakness of Eugène's army, not Eugène's conduct, that was Napoleon's main concern. The correspondence between the emperor and his stepson clearly shows this. The content of these letters also points at another remarkable difference between the two campaigns. At the outbreak of the 1809 campaign, Napoleon did not completely trust Eugène's skills as an independent general, operating a hundred miles away from his mentor. Thus, in a series of very detailed letters, Napoleon lectured his stepson on how to wage the war in Northern Italy and put forward a list of principles concerning the defense of its eastern accesses. Admittedly, this was a subject for which he had a natural bent.

Napoleon's suggested strategy was designed to fully exploit the peculiar geographical pattern of the region, namely, the sequel of rivers crossing the Venetian plain and cutting across the enemy's line of advance. By concentrating behind those natural obstacles, the French army could easily defend itself from frontal attacks and prepare to strike back. At the beginning, the viceroy did not follow Napoleon's advice, and this failure almost cost him the campaign. After the battle of Sacile, however, Eugène learned his lesson and strictly adhered to Napoleon's strategic guidelines. He never regretted it.

Conversely, in 1813 Napoleon's few letters to the viceroy rarely touched on the issue of the strategy required for the campaign. One may argue that the emperor, besides being too busy himself, now looked upon Eugène as a reliable, independent commander and one who knew how to fight in Italy.

When comparing Eugène's two campaigns in Italy, further differences are found in the country's politics as well as the psychological and social situation of the Italian people. Unlike in 1809, in 1813 the Kingdom of Northern Italy was, in every sense, a war-torn country. It had been drained of every male fit for service and had suffered huge losses in the campaigns in Russia and Spain. Continuous taxation had also deprived it of all financial resources. Social discontent spread over a vast majority of the Italian people, who showed no interest in the prosecution of the war and the personal fate of the French viceroy, however personally respectable he might appear. They only yearned for peace. French departments in Italy were no better off at that time.

Riots in the cities, popular insurgencies in the countryside, and high rates of desertion in the military had frequently dotted Italy throughout the Napoleonic years. In 1813, however, such problems became a constant plague that mirrored

deep social dissatisfaction. In brief, in 1813 Eugène generally lacked the psychological and political support of the Italian people, whereas in previous years, most notably in 1809, he had benefited from it. Moreover, the idea of an independent nation was growing stronger among the political elites and the intelligentsia. Numerous patriotic secret societies were founded in the Kingdom of Italy after 1809 and other parts of the peninsula. Most of them had an explicit anti-French bias.

In contrasting 1813 with 1809, however, it is at the highest strategic level that the most relevant differences between the two campaigns are observed. In 1809 the course of the war in Northern Italy developed as a consequence of the overall strategic evolution in both the Italian and Danube theaters. In the Danube Valley the Austrian defeat at Eckmühl obliged Erzherzog Karl to retreat toward Vienna. Meanwhile, in Italy, Erzherzog Johann missed the opportunity to keep his demoralized enemy under pressure.

The Austrians, failing to mount an effective pursuit after Sacile, allowed the battered Army of Italy to withdraw in relatively good order behind the strong defensive line of the Adige. At this juncture, the Austrian commander became progressively more concerned with the weakening of his field forces, due to the drainage of troops needed to watch his excessively elongated lines of communication. Upon receiving the unexpected news of the Austrian reverse in Bavaria, Erzherzog Johann immediately sensed that the strategic prospect in Italy was about to change radically. First, as war in the Danube Valley moved rapidly eastward, he perceived he ran the risk of being cut off from Vienna. Second, he correctly anticipated that the Austrian retreat from Bavaria would uncover the northern accesses to the Tyrol. After a few days, in fact, General Lefebvre's Bavarian corps began invading the region. FML Chasteler's column, which Erzherzog Johann had detached for operating down the Upper Adige Valley toward Trento and Verona, was then forced to interrupt his operations and withdrew. Thus vanished the Austrian plan of delivering a double-pronged thrust from Venetia and Tyrol.

Erzherzog Johann now faced two alternatives. He could try to break through the line of the Adige by means of a frontal assault from the east. Or he could retreat. The former, admittedly, was not an encouraging prospect for an army that had to attack a numerically superior enemy occupying what was probably the strongest defensive line in Northern Italy. Erzherzog Johann wisely decided for the latter solution and withdrew toward the Austrian border.

One may truly argue that by that time the Austrian commander in Italy had already let his chance of victory slip away. It is, however, hardly disputable that it was the strategic evolution of the war in the Danube Valley and, above all, what this may imply for Tyrol that hastened Johann's decision to retreat from the Adige.

In 1813, the course of the war in Germany was once again crucial to the outcome of the war in Italy. This time, however, Eugène was not as lucky as four years before.

Both Napoleon and the viceroy were perfectly aware that Saxony was too far removed from Italy to allow any form of military cooperation between the French armies. However, as long as Bavaria remained in the Confederation of the Rhine and a French Ally, Austria would have problems implementing military operations in the Tyrol and the Upper Adige Valley. Rather unexpectedly, on 8 October 1813, a few days before the Battle of Leipzig, the king of Bavaria and Eugène's father-in-law signed a treaty with the Allies. The Bavarian defection gave Austria a free hand in the Tyrol, and the Habsburg headquarters did not miss the opportunity to launch the classic "double-pronged attack" into Italy. A corps much stronger than that commanded by Chasteler in 1809 was sent down the Upper Adige Valley to menace Verona and Eugène's rear. News of the Austrian advance from the Tyrol obliged the viceroy to order a hasty retreat from the line of Tagliamento to the Adige. In contrast to 1809 where the presence of the Bavarian army had prevented Austrian movement into the Tyrol that would have greatly worried the French army in Italy, in 1813 it was the Bavarian defection that made the Austrian advance down the Tyrol possible.

A few days after his retreat behind the Adige, Eugène was informed of Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig. Besides a negative impact on morale, the outcome of the Battle of Nations did bear another important consequence on the war in Italy. It was, in fact, after Leipzig that Murat's loyalty to the emperor abruptly vanished. The king of Naples hastened home and resumed with redoubled energy his negotiations with Austria and Great Britain.

Unlike Napoleon, Eugène had never much relied on Murat's army for help in Italy. But, beginning in November 1813, he had to constantly bear in mind the prospect of a Neapolitan threat from the south. This radically changed the strategic situation, reducing Eugène's chances of victory to almost nil. With Murat's defection, the viceroy could now only hope to gain time and bring the war to a stalemate, and this was what he succeeded in doing. When Eugène's Neapolitan nightmare materialized in January, he had already taken his decision to withdraw behind the Mincio under the cover of the fortresses of Mantua and Peschiera. Here the Army of Italy stood undefeated until Napoleon's abdication in France and the armistice of Schiarino-Rizzino.

One may conclude that in both 1809 and 1813 the evolution of the strategic situation north of the Alps did profoundly influence the development of the campaign in Italy. In 1809 Eugène strongly benefited from Napoleon's victory at Eckmühl, which led Erzherzog Johann to retreat. In 1813, on the contrary, the Bavarian early defection and Murat's treachery after Leipzig put Eugène in a very precarious situation that sealed the final collapse of the Kingdom of Italy. In both situations, however, Eugène showed sufficient military skills to react to events that were largely out of his control. In 1809 he did not let his chance slip away and immediately set out in pursuit of Erzherzog Johann, setting up the premises for his victories on the Piave and the Raab. In 1813–1814, despite being pressed from every side and heavily outnumbered, he was able to adopt

sound defensive countermeasures that—if they did not save him the kingdom—at least allowed him to escape defeat in the field.

COMMENTS ON SOURCES

This is one of the most poorly documented campaigns of the Napoleonic Wars. We are fortunate, however, to have uncovered some works from firsthand witnesses. Among these are an account by Vignolle, Chief of Staff to Eugène, who was a principal player in most of the actions in Northern Italy. If nothing else, he certainly read the official reports of the French participants in every action and possessed a full and complete knowledge of the military activity during the campaign.

A second work is the account of the invasion of the Roman states by Bellaire, who was a staff officer to General Barbou. Barbou served during this campaign as commander of the fortress of Ancona, and Bellaire served with him at this time. A similar valuable firsthand account was identified in the form of Vacani's account of the Battle of Mincio. Vacani had been a Chef de bataillon of engineers in the Army of Northern Italy.

Vaudoncourt was a contemporary but not an eyewitness. We received a major blow when we reviewed Vaudoncourt's account of the campaign. The blow was struck not because of its originality, its insight, or its contributions to the study of the campaign but because of its nearly verbatim plagiarism of Vignolle's account. It varied only in its account of the Mincio and a few other minor events where some original research was apparently done. Not only were we disappointed with Vaudoncourt's ethics, but we were distressed to find that what we had hoped would be a major contributing source was little more than simply another copy of Vignolle's account.

As a near contemporary, Sporschil provides more details from the Austrian perspective, an account highly prized. He obviously explored various Austrian archives and may well have interviewed participants of the wars for his *Die grosse Chronik*. However, he also seems to have been liberal in his use of other authors of his time, and his account of the Mincio is strongly reminiscent of that written by Vaudoncourt. Though they are not eyewitness accounts, von Welden's and von Holtz's accounts turned out to be very helpful sources on the Austrian actions.

The single most significant source, however, was the much later multivolume work by Weil—*Le Prince Eugène et Murat*. Though we depended far more heavily on the contemporary works, Weil proved to have an imposing collection of documentation including an incredible number of Austrian official reports from the Kriegsarchiv in Vienna. Weil helped to clarify numerous points.

As with all works, this work was a collective effort. Marco and I had been gathering materials independently for this work prior to our meeting. Upon our acquaintance, an exchange of data began until we discovered we were potential competitors. Our compromise resulted in a joint authorship and this work, an

effort far superior to our individual efforts. Today, the Napoleonic community seems to be demanding more extensive joint efforts. Rather correctly, many individuals interested in the military history of the Napoleonic age seem to believe that international cooperation will play a key role in providing easier access to and use of archival and primary sources in different countries as well as knocking down those linguistic barriers that too often impaired truly objective and in-depth research. Marco and I do believe that this work, researched by two people living thousands of miles apart and assembled entirely via the Internet, is a step in the aforementioned direction.

It is appropriate and necessary to acknowledge those who contributed to the preparation of this work. First, my coauthor Marco Gioannini never failed to amaze me with his linguistic skills, his adeptness at locating obscure documents, and his ability to squeeze a few more paragraphs out of a source document. It was his eagerness that brought this book to completion years before it might have otherwise seen the light of day.

Marco was not without a support network, and jointly we owe considerable thanks to Giovanna Giacobello Bernard and Clara Vitulo, director and director assistant of the Biblioteca Reale of Turin; Giulio Massobrio, director of the Alessandria Civic Library; Piero Crociani of Rome; the staff of the Milan State Archives; Professor Maurizio Viroli and his junior assistant, Jason Scorza, who helped us to get access to the Beauharnais Archive at Princeton University; and Alberto Morera, who prepared the maps that appear throughout the book.

There are also “the usual suspects” who assisted in this book’s preparation, plus a few new faces. Three close personal friends—Warren Worley, John Brewster, and Commander Chris Janiec, United States Navy—provided readings and commentaries that were of tremendous assistance and greatly appreciated. This time, however, source material was a considerable problem, and invaluable materials were graciously provided by Colonel John Elting of New York; Alfons Liebert of Louvans, Belgium; Digby Smith of Hanau, Germany; John Brewster, whose travels would make the gypsies jealous; and Colin J. Allen of London, England. All five men graciously provided copies of obscure works held in their personal collections or local libraries that made substantial contributions to this work.

We also extend our thanks to Peter Hofschöerer, who lent his translation skills to the effort, ensuring that the translation of the Convention of Schiarino-Rizzino was perfect in every way, and to David Hollins, who sent us several useful Austrian sources.

NOTE ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

The Italian modern form of the names of all the cities in Italy have been used throughout this text. In the case of the eastern provinces of what was then called Illyria and is now part of modern Slovenia and Croatia, the toponyms have changed frequently over time due to different German, Serbian, and Italian lin-

guistic influences. In the text we used the original name from the period of this campaign, and the modern Slovenian and Croatian names have been placed in parentheses after the original name—for example, Karlstadt (Karlovac). This may help when using a modern map. However, the names of the various valleys in Austria and Tyrol appear in the English modern form, with the original German form in parentheses—for example, Drava Valley (Drautal).

Map 1
Italy in 1813: The Political Situation



Introduction

The destruction of the Grande Armée in Russia had resulted in the withdrawal of the French armies into Germany, where war soon followed it. The debris of the Grande Armée, destroyed by the cold of winter, starvation, and disease, was unable to reunite until it was behind the Oder River and in the Prussian heartland, which seethed with anti-French hatred and treachery. Despite this, once free of the snow and ice of the Russian winter, Napoleon immediately began rebuilding his war machine.

In January 1813, Prince Eugène, viceroy of Italy and Napoleon's adopted son, was placed in command of the Grande Armée and told to hold the line in Germany against the advancing Russians. In fact, Napoleon had left Maréchal Murat, king of Naples, in command as he returned to France to begin the effort of rebuilding his armies. Murat, however, had little stomach for the job, promptly dropped the command into Eugène's lap, and headed south for the warm climes of Naples.

Eugène's efforts to stop the combined advance of the Russians and their new Allies, the Prussians, failed. He was obliged to withdraw before their combined superior numbers, but to be fair, though he displayed little inspiration for the task, he was bombarded with directions from Napoleon, who attempted to run the war from Paris and whose letters were always many days out of date. Eugène soon abandoned the line of the Oder and withdrew to the Elbe. Napoleon was furious at his abandonment of so much territory to the Russians and soon found it necessary to return to the army. On 15 April Napoleon departed France for Germany, and on 10 May Eugène was ordered to Italy. It is unlikely that he was dismissed because Napoleon felt him a failure. Instead, it is far more likely that Eugène's trusted hand was required in Italy.

As Napoleon had prepared for the Russian campaign in 1811 and early 1812,

the formation of the first Corps d'Observation d'Italie (or IV Corps of the Grande Armée) had depleted the Kingdom of Northern Italy cadre of the French and Italian forces that occupied it. When this corps left for Russia, only a few battalions remained in the kingdom on a "wartime" footing. The regiments, which departed for Russia with the Italian Corps, had left behind only their weak depots and those incapable of a campaign.

During the winter of 1812 a second Corps d'Observation was organized in Italy, and at the beginning of 1813, it was under the command of General Count Grenier and had orders to move to the banks of the Elbe—Germany! In order to organize this small army, it had been necessary not only to take all the field battalions left behind in Italy during the 1812 campaign but also to build new battalions to replace those destroyed in Russia. Those that were fit were taken from the hospitals, and those veteran soldiers still left in the depots marched with Grenier for Germany. Later a third Corps d'Observation was organized under the orders of General Count Bertrand. The greatest portion of this corps consisted of newly organized conscripts trained during the course of the year and leavened with those few veteran soldiers that were still to be found in the depots of the various regiments. Not only was it necessary to send every man capable of bearing arms into the line, but the depots were stripped of instructors and artisans. These specialists were pressed into active service.¹

When Grenier's Corps d'Observation left for Germany, the various garrisons in Italy found themselves totally stripped of troops. The returns of the regimental garrisons still in Italy contained quartermasters and a small number of soldiers too lame to march north. The subsequent conscription would rebuild these depots, but the fruits of this conscription were unable to consolidate around existing cadres. In theory, this lack of cadre was a disaster in the making. The function of the cadre is to train the new drafts by their example. This new conscription lacked those veterans, and these young soldiers, filled with zeal but deprived of experience, were obliged to find their guides and instructors within their own ranks.

It is true that after Moscow, Napoleon reduced the number of battalions in his army and sent the cadres of those newly disbanded battalions to France and to Italy. However, few, if any, were actually sent to Italy. The small number that escaped from Russia found themselves closed up in the garrisons of the various fortresses that the defecting Prussians had placed under siege. The remains of the IV Corps were sealed in Glogau and lost to Eugène.

In addition, because of the need to augment the troops in Germany, orders for the formation of several new reserve armies were issued in France and in Italy. A new conscription was necessary, and theoretically, the peace that existed in Italy as a result of the alliance with Austria should have given Eugène the time necessary to form these units. Indeed, Napoleon's actions in Germany give considerable proof of Napoleon's confidence in Austria's willingness to adhere to this armistice.

As already seen, the means necessary to refill the cadres as directed by the

Imperial decrees were absolutely lacking in Italy. The greater part of the nucleus that was to organize this army consisted of no more than 20 individuals of all grades. Other forces ordered to Italy were provisional regiments. They were to come from France, and their formation was barely ordered. If one counts the Croatian troops (which could not be moved from their territory) and the Neapolitan troops, still theoretically allied to France, a substantial force was to be had. However, the 70 battalions and 24 squadrons that were to form this new corps in Italy existed only on paper.²

When Eugène returned to Italy, his first concern was to expedite, as much as possible, the formation of a new army. The success of this effort, however, was threatened by the barely concealed hostile intentions of Austria. Napoleon had given Eugène the greatest latitude and the greatest powers to complete his task. Eugène saw himself authorized to organize, according to the circumstances, the army that he was to command. In order to hasten its formation, he ordered a conscription in the departments of France closest to the Kingdom of Italy. Those departments were mostly Italian provinces incorporated into the French Empire but also included the few departments to the west and at the foot of the Alps.

This recruitment occurred quickly because it was made on territory far from the heart of Napoleon's France. However, one effect of this conscription was to strip Napoleon of troops that would have been most valuable in his defense of France in 1814. On the other hand, the immediate result of this action was that the Army of Italy became almost entirely Italian. By the time this army recrossed the Alps into France in 1814, national interests, if they had not changed, were at least divided. Before that, however, one could argue that this was the first truly Italian army fighting to defend an Italian homeland.³

The new Italian conscription was very successful. The conscripts from the French departments of Italy arrived in the interval between Eugène's return to Italy and the outbreak of hostilities with Austria. The new units filled out quickly; however, they lacked officers, noncommissioned officers, and weapons. The depots and the corps magazines had been exhausted by earlier efforts and were insufficient to equip the army.

Theoretically the army contained 80,000 men but would eventually only rise to 50,000 men. Napoleon had also issued orders authorizing the transfer of 300 officers and noncommissioned officers to Italy from Spain. Eugène had been authorized to recall these men from the various Spanish garrisons, including the one in Barcelona. However, it required time for those men to arrive, and during this time, the regiments were swelling their ranks with newly drafted conscripts.

Despite the size of the task, Eugène's extraordinary and indefatigable efforts managed to weld this collection of raw humanity into an army. Uniforms were obtained as quickly as possible and reduced to the absolute minimum necessity. Weapons of all types were gathered and repaired, then distributed to the various corps. The conscripts were constantly drilled and provided with noncommissioned officers as soon as they became available.

When this new army went into the field, it was an army of recruits led by

other recruits. Though dressed in vests and fatigue hats, their pockets filled with cartridges, they would fight valiantly to sustain the reputation of the regiments to which they belonged. They had, however, received no inheritance beyond their regiment's name.

As the summer of 1813 and the armistice rolled on toward September, the negotiations with the Allied powers indicated that Austria would abandon its alliance with France and join the Allies. Napoleon pressed Eugène to hasten the formation of the Army of Italy while striving to hold the Austrian court to its alliance, as it had not yet filled out its cadres and was still well below its ordered strength. It was politically necessary for Napoleon to have an army on the eastern borders of Italy to unsettle Austria and to protect his other interests.⁴

The armistice in Germany broke on 15 August 1813, and the war resumed. When hostilities began with Austria, Eugène was immediately faced with an insurrection to the southeast, in Illyria. He hastened to move there with his army, such as it was. The results of Napoleon's German campaign in August and September 1813 were painful but inconclusive. Had it been otherwise, Eugène should have been able to maintain his position in Italy long enough to complete his army and to successfully defend the eastern frontiers of his kingdom. However, the tacit neutrality and eventual betrayal of Napoleon by Bavaria freed Austria to invade part of the Tyrol. The defection of Bavaria to the Allied cause threatened the heart of the Kingdom of Northern Italy by opening up its northern flank to the possibility of invasion. Furthermore, the defection of the perfidious Murat, king of Naples, carried away the provinces on the right bank of the Po River as he moved his army into the rear of the Kingdom of Italy. These different circumstances forced successive withdrawals by Eugène, behind the Isonzo, the Adige, and the Mincio. Eugène established himself firmly in this last position and remained victorious until the Allies had penetrated into the heart of France and forced Napoleon's abdication. Ultimately, the events in Paris brought an end to the glorious yet unequal contest. The Army of Italy, undefeated in battle, laid down its arms, and the Kingdom of Northern Italy ceased to exist.⁵

1

War Comes to Italy

At the end of March 1813 the III Corps d'Observation (later the IV Corps) left Northern Italy for Germany under the orders of General Bertrand. It soon took part in the Battle of Lützen and would fight until the Battle of Leipzig, when it effectively ceased to exist. When GD Bertrand took the III Corps d'Observation north, both the Kingdom of Italy and the French departments in the rest of the peninsula found themselves stripped of troops. The “army” that remained consisted solely of depots scattered throughout Italy. It was unorganized and incapable of service in the field. If united, they would have barely formed a handful of active battalions.

Beginning in January, Napoleon had taken prompt and energetic measures to repair the effects of the disasters of the Russian campaign. Thousands of recruits were conscripted throughout both France and the Kingdom of Northern Italy. Various sedentary formations were drawn together. New units were constituted, and old ones were reconstituted, absorbing the new conscripts. However, all these reinforcements were destined to join the Army of Germany as it frantically reformed itself.

Napoleon did not turn his attention to Italy until April, other than to address a couple of letters to General Fontanelli, Minister of War of the Kingdom of Italy, in January. Napoleon limited himself to recommending that the fortresses of Osoppo and Palmanova should be adequately armed.¹

Despite being strenuously engrossed in the reshaping of the Grande Armée and preparations for the forthcoming campaign in Germany, at the beginning of April, Napoleon started showing signs of concern with the situation of the Army of Italy. On 2 April he wrote again to Fontanelli, this time requiring a report on how, by the end of June, Eugène might organize three divisions, two French and one Italian, each formed with 16 battalions and supporting artillery, and

three cavalry regiments, one of which had to be French. This was to be the origin of the new Army of Italy.

Meanwhile, General Fontanelli was not idling his time away. On 26 February he had called to arms the 1814 levy of the Kingdom of Italy. According to his conscription scheme, which was reported to the emperor on 7 April, all conscripts of the Class of 1814 would be called to their colors and join their units in the first 15 days of May. By that time the following units would be organizing: four battalions of the Guard Chasseurs à pied in Milan, four battalions of the 1st Légère in Trento, four battalions of the 3rd Légère in Udine and Trieste, four battalions of the 2nd Line in Ancona, four of the 3rd in Venice, and four squadrons of the 2nd and 3rd Chasseurs à Cheval in Lodi. In addition, the reshaping of the Army of the Kingdom of Italy would include two foot batteries, a sapper company, a military equipage company, and a divisional ambulance. Rather unexpectedly, the new levy was a great success, and by 8 May, Fontanelli could report to the viceroy, Prince Eugène, that 14,473 conscripts out of 15,000 had already reached their depots where they would soon begin their training.²

After rebuilding the Guard Chasseur à pied Regiment, organization began on a battalion of velites, a battalion of grenadiers, a company of gardes d'honneur, a squadron of dragoons, a horse battery, a company of foot artillery, and two companies of guard train, all of which were to be completed in July. This would raise the Royal Italian Guard nearly up to its full strength. Shortly after, a small detachment of gendarmerie d'élite (40 men), four squadrons of the Queen's Dragoons, and a horse and a foot battery would be completed. As soon as adequately refitted, the Guard Division was to move to Verona or Brescia and join the assembling army.³ Napoleon had ordered the Guard Division to move to Verona or Brescia and join the Corps d'Observation de Verona.

An Imperial decree of 14 April set out a reorganization of the Italian troops in Spain. Two weak divisions were merged to form a stronger one. This new organization made possible the dispatch of many seasoned soldiers to Italy (30 men from each infantry regiment, 25 from each cavalry regiment). The veterans of Spain were destined to reinforce the cadres of the Italian Guard.⁴

The elite units being thus refitted, the line regiments were still lacking those veteran cadres desperately needed for training the conscripts. Despite Fontanelli's efforts, the shortage of cadres was particularly felt in the Army of the Kingdom of Italy. The Italians were also short of greatcoats, shoes, trousers, and even muskets.

While not seriously understrength, the six French regiments stationed in Italy (each comprising four war battalions plus a depot battalion) were in no better condition, as far as arms and equipment were concerned.

There was no serious effort to rebuild the Army of Italy until the issuance of the Decree of 18 April. This decree directed the formation of a Corps d'Observation de l'Adige, and the organization of this force was temporarily entrusted to GD Vignolle, who, until Eugène returned from Germany, commanded all the troops stationed in the Kingdom of Italy. The cadre of this army

was organized into four infantry divisions; three of the divisions were French and numbered the 46th, 47th, and 48th, and one was Italian, numbered the 49th. These four divisions would have a total of 64 battalions, including 36 French battalions (33,310 men), 2 Croatian battalions (1,680 men), 4 elite battalions formed from the 1st and 2nd Foreign Regiments (2,400 men), 16 battalions of Italians (13,440 men), and 6 Neapolitan battalions (5,040 men),⁵ representing, on paper, an effective strength of 55,870 men. In addition, there was a cavalry division with 18 squadrons. The king of Naples was to furnish 6 squadrons to this force.

Strictly following Napoleon's instructions, Clarke (Duc de Feltre and the French Minister of War) proposed the organization of two supplementary divisions for the Corps d'Observation de l'Adige. A fifth division (51st Infantry Division) was to be organized with three brigades, for a paper strength of 15,185 men. The 1st Brigade was to contain the 4th Provisional Croatian Regiment and a force of 3,000 drawn from 5 small fusilier battalions of the 1st Foreign Regiment. The 2nd Brigade was to be formed from 12 fusilier companies of the 2nd Foreign Regiment and the 25th Demi-Brigade (2/1st, 3/16th, 6/62nd Line Regiments). The 3rd Brigade would contain the 23rd (6/47th, 6/70th, 6/82nd Line Regiments) and 24th (6/15th, 6/121st, 6/122nd Line Regiments) Provisional Demi-Brigades. The 6th Division (52nd Infantry Division; expected strength: 16,800 men) was to be formed with 10 Italian and 10 Neapolitan battalions.⁶

However, as mentioned earlier, only conscription alone was able to fill out an organization whose base did not exist. The only regimental depots, which could be used to process drafts, were, for the most part, in the Kingdom of Italy or in that part of Italy that had become part of Metropolitan France. The conscripts were identified and finally sent to the depots, but with difficulty. The army existed only on paper. As for the conscription, the new recruits were identified and finally sent to the depots. However, lack of cadres made the reorganization proceed at a very slow pace.

In compliance with Napoleon's orders, the four divisions of the Corps d'Observation de l'Adige were to leave for Germany as soon as they were fit for active service, and the two remaining divisions were to be entrusted with the defense of the Italian borders.

The new army, however, existed only on paper. The rates of desertion were increasingly high in both the Croatian and the other foreign units. Moreover, the Croats were only too eager to return serving under the Habsburg banner. The three provisional demi-brigades were not yet en route from France and had a long journey before them. Worse still, Murat did not show himself particularly inclined to release the infantry and cavalry he had promised.

The Imperial Decree ordering the formation of the Corps d'Observation de l'Adige had barely arrived in Italy when Lieutenant-General Count Grenier was sent back from Germany to assume the post of commander in chief. Until Grenier arrived, however, only the cadres could be organized.

On 12 May, 10 days after the battle of Lützen, Napoleon urged Eugène to leave that evening for Italy. Though his trip took him through several German capitals, including Munich, his duties did not permit him to delay his travels for the various receptions offered to him.⁷

Six days later, on 18 May, Eugène arrived in Milan to the cheers of the population. In his person, Eugène combined the positions of commander in chief of the Army of the Kingdom of Italy as well as of those French troops stationed in Illyria and in the 27th, 28th, 29th, and 30th French Military Divisions (Piedmont, Liguria, Tuscany, and Rome) with the appointment of senior magistrate of the Kingdom of Italy. Holding this double authority, plus that vested in him by Napoleon, Eugène hastened the formation of the army he was to command.

The goal of this rearmament so far from the main theater of war was to intimidate Austria with a threat against its southern borders. It is quite possible that Napoleon considered this as at least the principal and possibly the only goal of the Army of Italy. Whatever the case may have been, it was more prudent to prepare for the eventuality of war with Austria than to ignore it, especially when Austria had historical claims on Italy. So while publicly preparing the larger and ideal force directed by the succession of Imperial decrees, Eugène occupied himself particularly with organizing a solid core for the army that he would command as he repulsed any possible invasion of Italy by the Austrians.⁸

The first measure taken by Eugène was to centralize the formation of the Corps d'Observation de l'Adige and to establish the conscript processing depots around it, so that at any time all available forces could be concentrated. The 46th Division, placed in the first line, was to be organized in Padua, Treviso, and Bassano. The 47th Division, the second line, was to be formed in Vicenza, Verona, and Rovereto. The 48th Division, the third line, was to reunite in Mantua, Bozzolo, and Montichiari. The 49th Division, the fourth line, was to be formed in Brescia, and the cavalry was to organize in Cremona, Valeggio, and Castiglione delle Stiviere.⁹

Shortly before Eugène returned to Milan, Peyri's Italian Division (1st, 4th, 6th, and 7th Line Regiments, and Milan Guard Battalion) had departed for Germany, and subsequently several large groups of reinforcements (1st Italian Light Regiment and 2nd Italian Chasseurs à Cheval) had also been dispatched north. However, veteran troops were expected daily to arrive from Spain, and the survivors of the Russian campaign were slowly flowing back. Arms and equipment were drawn from the French arsenals in Turin and Grenoble, whereas horses were being purchased wherever they could be found. Field batteries were being organized in Pavia, along with the bridging train and various other vehicles and horse gear. The army was expected to be ready to take the field in July 1813.¹⁰

On 23 May, Eugène informed the emperor about the location of the Italian infantry battalions. Twenty-two were in Germany, 8 in Spain, 1 in Corfu, 5 in Dalmatia, and only 16 in Italy, of which 4 had been recently formed from the levy of 1814 (6th and 7th Battalions of the 4th and 7th Line Regiments). Claim-

ing the formation of a second Italian division was unfeasible, Eugène proposed to recall 3 veteran battalions from Cattaro and Ragusa, in Dalmatia.¹¹

In the first days of June, Eugène learned that a dozen new French battalions were to join his army. The good news and the steady progress in the rebuilding of the Army of Italy caused Eugène to direct the organization of a fifth division and to begin concentrating the army on the eastern frontier of the kingdom. The 48th Division, which was to have 15 battalions, was moved to Udine, Cividale, and Gemona. The 46th Division, equally with 15 battalions, stood between Treviso, Bassano, and Pordenone. These two divisions were organized into the second Lieutenancy.¹² The first Lieutenancy contained the 47th Division (15 battalions), placed in Verona and Vicenza, and the 49th Division, with 16 battalions, in Padua and Venice. A reserve division, with 15 battalions, was to organize in Montichiari, near Brescia. The cavalry, numbering 18 squadrons, was ordered to deploy between Castiglione delle Stiviere, Mantua, and Verona. The 6 battalions of the Royal Italian Guard were ordered to form a reserve at the general headquarters in Brescia.¹³

Though returns indicate the Army of Italy was so organized, this force was illusionary and far below its ordered strength. It contained, outside of the Croatian and Neapolitan troops, several regiments that had only just been ordered formed and had yet to join the army. To approximate the actual strength of the Army of Italy, it is necessary to eliminate more than 20 battalions from this force. Consequently, including the Royal Guard, no more than 60 battalions were in Italy at the end of June.¹⁴ Of those units actually present, not only were many far below strength, but all contained a high percentage of men who were not trained or equipped.¹⁵

MURAT'S CHANGING POSITION

Murat was married to Caroline Bonaparte, Napoleon's sister. This made him Eugène's uncle. When Napoleon had made Eugène viceroy of Italy, the relationship between Eugène and his uncle, Murat, quickly soured. Murat had been disappointed that Joseph became king of Spain instead of him, and this was another major affront to his dignity. It is impossible to separate Murat's ego from the pressures of his wife, whose serpentine whisperings in his ear provoked much discontent.

Murat was not secure in his hold on the Neapolitan throne. Of course, there was the threat from the war, but he was also insecure because of his sense of falling from Napoleon's favor. Murat had his throne solely because Napoleon had placed him there.

When Napoleon quit the remains of the Grande Armée during its retreat from Moscow, he left Murat in command. Murat, however, had suffered a complete collapse of his spirit and soon threw the reins to Eugène without Napoleon's knowledge or approval. This act of insubordination greatly exacerbated the re-

lationship between Napoleon and Murat, resulting in a sharp rebuke published in *Le Moniteur*, the official newspaper of the French government.¹⁶

A further prick to Murat's security occurred on 26 February 1813 when a British expedition, under Lord Bentinck, seized the island of Ponza, on the Neapolitan coast, and held it against all Neapolitan efforts to retake it. No doubt Berthier's comment that Murat, being a Frenchman, should be willing to sacrifice his throne for the benefit of the French Empire was ringing in his ears.

Toward the end of February 1813, Murat sent Prince Cariati to Vienna to test the waters at that court for the establishment of some form of relations, perhaps to begin overtures that might lead to the security that Murat sought for his throne. Negotiations were opened at a Viennese court eager to exploit any cracks in Napoleon's hegemony over Europe.

Metternich was very sensitive to Murat's situation and hesitation to plunge into treason. Geographically Naples was separated from Austria by French territory, so military cooperation would be difficult. Being the premier diplomat of Europe, Metternich, like a skilled angler, played the line to Murat slowly and with a gentle hand.¹⁷

Murat, however, was not willing to trust his fate solely to his negotiations with Vienna. Contacts were also made with the British, who seemed equally pleased with Murat's diplomatic feelers, and serious contacts quickly developed. The British government pledged to aid the king in holding his throne if he would join the Allied field, separate himself from Napoleon, and proclaim the independence of Italy.

Bentinck, Britain's proconsul in Sicily, moved to Catania to pursue his negotiations with Murat. However, a series of dispatches from Napoleon, filled with glowing reports of the situation in France, caused Murat to vacillate yet again, and negotiations ceased.

Murat resolved to remain faithful to Napoleon, and Bentinck took this rejection very badly. He resolved to never again treat with Murat, nor listen to any of the overtures that came as the fall campaign in Germany developed.¹⁸ From that point on, Lord Bentinck's political opposition as well as personal ill will toward Murat was to become a major hindrance to any treaty between the Kingdom of Naples and the Allied powers.

PLESSWITZ ARMISTICE

After the French victories of Lützen and Bautzen, the Allies had been driven steadily eastward. They had great need of rest and refitting, not only after those two defeats but also to repair what they could of their losses from the 1812 campaign and the advance out of Russia. To give them the respite they needed, the diplomats had been called forward.

On 2 June, plenipotentiaries representing the French and Allies met at Plesswitz and negotiated a 36-hour suspension of arms. With the suspension of arms in place, negotiations for an armistice began. On 4 June, the negotiations came

to a conclusion. In the end, Napoleon accepted a seven-week armistice, subject to only a six-day notice of termination.¹⁹ This ended the Spring Campaign of 1813.

As the armistice would nominally end in mid-September, for Italy it would mean three months of undisturbed but frantic preparations. Unfortunately for Eugène, not only did this pause mean that Napoleon would strip more troops out of his feeble army, but it also gave the Austrians equal time to prepare the army that was to face him. As if that weren't enough, the armistice actually ended in mid-August, a month earlier than anticipated.

THE ARMY OF ITALY GROWS

Six battalion cadres from Durutte's division were dispatched south from Augsburg to Verona on 9 June, where they were to arrive on 29 June to be filled out with 4,300 French conscripts and then returned north. Another unit belonging to the same division, the 3/35th Légère Regiment, had reached full strength and was en route to Verona, where it was due to arrive on 14 June. Shortly afterward, the 1st Hussar Regiment and 31st Chasseur à Cheval Regiment were ordered to join the 19th Chasseurs and would have their ranks filled out in Paicenza, where the latter had its depot.

In two letters, dated 12 and 20 June, Eugène assured Napoleon that each regiment would contain two battalions, fully armed and equipped. Eugène went on to say that he anticipated having, by 1 July, 5,000 men per division, 1,500 cavalry, and all 120 guns fully equipped and ready for operations.

Eugène believed that the 3rd and 4th Battalions of each regiment would be ready to rejoin their regiments by 1 July and that the troops coming from Piedmont would probably arrive by 10 July. The battalions en route from Rome were expected to contain only conscripts and would probably arrive on 8 July. The anticipated Neapolitan brigade was another story, and no news had been received on this subject. All in all, Eugène was confident that the 25,000 men in Verona on 20 June would rise to 40,000 by 1 July and to 60,000 by 10 July.²⁰

However, the truth would not be as rosy as Eugène painted it. On 1 June the Army of the Kingdom of Italy contained 37,031 men, including 3,053 on leave, and 4,411 horses in Italy. It had a further 24,997 men and 5,945 horses serving with the Grande Armée in Germany and 8,528 men and 892 horses in Spain. There were a further 4,436 men in Illyria that could be used to defend Italy, 1,200 on the Ionian Islands, and 2,282 men on Corsica and the island of Elba, who theoretically could be used to defend Italy. There were also 14,230 French troops in regiments stationed in Italy, but they were almost entirely conscripts and lacked 6,100 men of their ordered full strength.²¹ The regiments in Piedmont and Tuscany were already en route, but those expected from Rome (6th Line and 14th Légère Regiments) had not even started incorporating their conscripts, let alone planning their march schedule. Another major problem Eugène was facing in this phase, and one that seriously delayed the reorganization of his

army, was a lasting shortage of superior officers, above all, division and brigade generals.²²

JULY 1813

In the first days of July, Eugène received an Imperial Decree dated 18 June that renamed the Corps d'Observation de Vérone the Corps d'Observation d'Italie. This decree established the newly renamed corps with four French, two Italian, and one Franco-Neapolitan Divisions. It was ordered to be organized as follows:²³

1st Division: (French)

- 9th Line Regiment (4 bns)
- 35th Line Regiment (4)
- 28th Provisional Demi-Brigade (3)
- 23rd Provisional Demi-Brigade (3)

2nd Division: (French)

- 84th Line Regiment (4)
- 92nd Line Regiment (4)
- 30th Provisional Demi-Brigade (3)
- 2 Battalions drawn from the cadres returned from Spain and presently scattered in the 7th, 8th, 9th, 19th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th Military Divisions

3rd Division: (French)

- 53rd Line Regiment (4)
- 106th Line Regiment (4)
- 29th Provisional Demi-Brigade (3)
- 24th Provisional Demi-Brigade (3)

4th Division: (French)

- 36th Légère Regiment (2)
- 42nd Line Regiment (2)
- 102nd Line Regiment (2)
- 31st Provisional Demi-Brigade (4)
- 25th Provisional Demi-Brigade (3)
- 1 Battalion drawn from the cadres returned from Spain and presently scattered in the 7th, 8th, 9th, 19th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th Military Divisions

5th Division: (Italian)

- 12 Battalions

6th Division: (Italian)

- Italian Guard (6 bns)
- Italian Line Troops (6 bns)

7th (Reserve) Division: (Franco-Neapolitan)

- 47th Line Regiment (2)
- 86th Line Regiment (2)
- 122nd Line Regiment (2)
- Neapolitan Infantry (8 bns)

Cavalry:

- 1 French Regiment
- 5 Italian Regiments
- 1 Neapolitan Regiment

Artillery:

- 3 French Horse Artillery Batteries
- 1 Italian Horse Battery
- 1 Neapolitan Horse Battery
- 9 French Foot Batteries
- 4 Italian Foot Batteries
- 1 Neapolitan Foot Battery
- 2 French 12pdr Reserve Batteries

Total:

- 94 infantry battalions (62 French, 24 Italian, and 8 Neapolitan)
- 5 cavalry regiments
- 158 guns (106 French, 38 Italian, and 14 Neapolitan)

Needless to say, it would take many weeks before the Corps d'Observation d'Italie could even draw near to its paper full strength. Nevertheless, Napoleon's explicit aim was to intimidate Austria by making her intelligence believe that a strong army was about to gather in Northern Italy. At this time, it was still not obvious that Austria would abandon its alliance with France. In view of this, Napoleon decided that Grenier should rejoin the Grande Armée in Germany with 42 battalions and 8 squadrons.

In late June, GD Grenier reported to the French Minister of War that the two divisions (47th and 49th) under his command were far from being ready for combat and that a great number of the units belonging to the 47th were still in the 28th Military Division. In the last few days of June, he had concentrated on the reformation of the 84th and 92nd Line Regiments. Like any other units in the Corps d'Observation d'Italie, these famous regiments were still unequipped and badly clothed. GD Grenier also worked on establishing a rudimentary organization for the artillery, cavalry, and sappers. Despite the strenuous efforts of Eugène and his subordinates, rebuilding an army from scratch was not as easy as putting it on paper. By June, Eugène recognized that the marching schedule the emperor had set for the Corps d'Observation d'Italie could not be

met and that it would take at least another month before his advanced guard would reach Laibach (Ljubljana).²⁴

As for the reserve division, when the promised Neapolitan troops failed to appear, Eugène began forming it around two Croatian regiments and the elite battalions organized from the two foreign regiments.²⁵ According to the Decree of 18 June, the reserve division should be completed by six French battalions of the 47th, 86th, and 122nd Line Regiments. While waiting for these units as well as the 23rd and the 24th Provisional Demi-Brigades (from Brittany), the 25th Provisional Demi-Brigade (from southern France), and the 31st Provisional Demi-Brigade (from Spain), the viceroy incorporated GD Durutte's veterans (35th and 36th Légère Regiments) into the Corps d'Observation d'Italie.²⁶

CONVENTION OF REICHENBACH

On 14 June, Count Nesselrode signed a convention with the Russians and Prussians at Reichenbach in which Austria agreed to declare war on France, should France refuse any of five conditions. Napoleon was soon aware of this agreement. He confronted Metternich, and a heated series of negotiations began that would eventually fail.²⁷

The terms of the Convention of Reichenbach and Napoleon's unwillingness to accept them left little doubt of the resumption of hostilities. At this juncture, an attack on Italy seemed inevitable. One of the points Austria demanded for its neutrality was the cession to Austria of the Illyrian provinces and Trieste. Since Napoleon would never concede this, war was inevitable. The Army of Italy had to be expanded if Italy was to be defended from the inevitable Austrian attack.

By 1 July, Eugène had decided that the 7th Division could not be formed because the Neapolitans were probably never coming and the Croatians and two foreign regiments could not be used in the line. Moreover, the French units that the Decree of 18 June theoretically assigned to the 7th Division were not expected to arrive until late in July (in fact, they never arrived). The other six divisions would have a strength of only 50,000 men until 15,000 more men arrived from the interior of France and were organized into provisional demi-brigades.²⁸

By mid-July Eugène had only 72 incomplete battalions, either in Italy or en route to Italy. His cavalry totaled only 12 squadrons. Eugène divided this force among the three Lieutenancies, two formed with French and one with Italian divisions. He formed a reserve and assigned the commanding officers to the various corps and divisions of his army. The records of the general staff provide the following organization for the Army of Italy.²⁹

GENERAL STAFF³⁰

First Organization³¹

His Highness Eugène of Italy, Commanding General

Aides-de-Camp:

Général de division Count Danthouard

Général de brigade Baron Triaire

Général de brigade Baron Gifflenga

Colonel Baron Bataille

Chef d'escadron Tascher de la Pagerie

Chef d'escadron Méjean

Chief of General Staff:	Général de division Count Vignolle
Artillery Commander:	Général de division Baron St.-Laurent
Artillery Chief of Staff:	Major of Artillery Ravichio
Engineering Commander:	Colonel Moydier
Assistant Engineering Commander:	Capitaine of Engineers Philabert
Chief Director:	Commissary Director Regnault
Inspector of Reviews:	Assistant Inspector Chevalier Pradel de St.-Charles
Provost Marshal:	Chef d'escadron of Gendarmes Favier Dumoulin
Aide-de-camp to Chief of Staff:	Capitaine Ménard
Assistant to General Staff:	Capitaine Fourn
Assistant to Staff:	Capitaine Caccia
Assistant to Staff:	Capitaine Pontheaux
Attached to Staff:	Lieutenant Maestrovich
War Commissioner:	Fourcade
Principal Physician to Staff:	Guillaume
Surgeon General:	Mocquot

Organization of the Lieutenancies***1st Lieutenancy:***

Commanding Officer: Lieutenant General Count Grenier

Chief of Staff: Adjudant-Commandant Bazin de Fontenelle

1st Division: Commanding General: General Baron Quesnel

Chief of Staff: Adjudant-Commandant Dupin

84th Line Regiment (4 bns)

92nd Line Regiment (4 bns)

30th Provisional Demi-Brigade (4 bns)

Located in Verona & Vicenza with 7,777 men and 18 guns, including 4 regimental guns.

3rd Division: Commanding General: General Baron Gratien

Chief of Staff: Chef d'escadron Castel-Labolbene

35th Légère Regiment (2 bns)

36th Légère Regiment (2 bns)

42nd Line Regiment (2 bns)

102nd Line Regiment (2 bns)

31st Provisional Demi-Brigade (3 bns)³²

Located in Vicenza, Bassano, and Castelfranco with 8,200 men and 16 guns.

2nd Lieutenancy:

Vacant

2nd Division: Commanding General: General Count Verdier

Chief of Staff: Unknown

9th Line Regiment (4 bns)

35th Line Regiment (4 bns)

28th Provisional Demi-Brigade (3 bns)

Located in Treviso and Pordenone with 7,486 men and 18 guns, including 4 regimental guns.

4th Division: Commanding General: General Marcognet

Chief of Staff: Unknown

53rd Line Regiment (4 bns)

106th Line Regiment (4 bns)

29th Provisional Demi-Brigade (3 bns)

Located in Udine and Palmanova with 7,189 men and 20 guns, including 4 regimental guns.

3rd Lieutenancy:

Commanding Officer: Général de division Count Pino

Chief of Staff: Colonel Paolucci

5th Division: Commanding Officer: General Count Palombini

Chief of Staff: Colonel Casella

2nd Italian Légère Regiment (1 bn)

1st Italian Line Regiment (1 bn)

2nd Italian Line Regiment (4 bns)

3rd Italian Line Regiment (4 bns)

Dalmatian Regiment (2 bns)

Located in Padua and Mestre with 9,562 men and 16 guns, including 2 regimental guns.

6th Division: Commanding Officer: General Baron Lecchi

Chief of Staff: Chef de bataillon Badalassi

1st Brigade: (in Brescia)

Royal Velites (1 bn)

Guard Chasseurs à pied Regiment (4 bns)

Guard Infantry Regiment (1 bn)³³

2nd Brigade: (in Fiume & Trieste)

3rd Italian Légère Regiment (4 bns)

4th Italian Légère Regiment (2 bns)

A total of 7,891 men and 16 guns.

Reserve:

Commanding Officer: Général de division Baron Bonfanti

Chief of Staff: Chef de bataillon Bacarini

Elite Battalions, 1st Foreign Regiment (2 bns)

Elite Battalion, 2nd Foreign Regiment (1 bn)

Located in Montechiari with 2,469 men.

Cavalry:

Commanding Officer: Général de division Mermet

Chief of Staff: Vacant

3rd Italian Chasseur à Cheval Regiment (4 sqns)

4th Italian Chasseur à Cheval Regiment (2 sqns)

Queen's Dragoon Regiment (4 sqns)

19th (French) Chasseur à Cheval Regiment (2 sqns)

Located in Cremona, Lodi, and Brescia with a total of 1,800 men. The artillery reserve consisted of two batteries, each with six 12pdr guns and two howitzers. The Grand Park contained a battery with six 6pdr guns and two howitzers.

Artillery Reserve & Grand Park:

Reserve Artillery

2 Foot Batteries (12-12pdrs and 6 howitzers)

Grand Park

6-6pdrs & 20 howitzers

As one can see from this return, the force present consisted of 50,574 infantry and 1,800 cavalry. It needs to be noted that these figures contained many partially trained conscripts, most of whom had not yet arrived from the depots, and a few "march" units.³⁴

The number of disposable men, which describes the number of combatants more accurately, is significantly lower and, according to Vignolle, was best estimated at 45,000 infantry and 1,500 cavalry. The 9th, 35th, 53rd, 84th, 92nd, and 106th French Regiments, the 2nd and 3rd Italian Line, the 3rd Italian Légère, the Dalmatians, and the 6 Guard Battalions had all fought in Russia.³⁵ These 44 battalions were almost totally annihilated, and the debris of their cadres had not yet arrived in Italy. It was necessary, therefore, to reform them entirely by

conscription, organizing them with a small number of officers coming from other units and with noncommissioned officers who were selected from among the brighter conscripts. When all the circumstances are reviewed, it becomes apparent that in the space of the two months since the receipt of the first orders from the emperor, the cadres of the battalions could not be complete, nor could the men be ready for field operations.³⁶

En route, but still in France, was a considerable force that was eagerly awaited. On 19 July these forces were as follows:³⁷

23rd Provisional Demi-Brigade

6/47th Line Regiment (en route from Lorient)

6/70th Line Regiment (en route from Brest)

6/86th Line Regiment (en route from St. Malo)

24th Provisional Demi-Brigade

6/15th Line Regiment (en route from Brest)

6/121st Line Regiment (en route from Blois)

6/122nd Line Regiment (en route from Vendôme)

25th Provisional Demi-Brigade

2/1st Line Regiment (en route from Marseille)

3/16th Line Regiment (en route from Toulon)

4/62nd Line Regiment (en route from Marseille) (this battalion was formerly the 6/62nd)

1/,2/,3/,6/1st Hussar Regiment

3 French Batteries (24 guns)

Of these forces, however, the 23rd and 24th Provisional Demi-Brigades were destined never to arrive, as they were diverted to Germany. Only the 25th Provisional Demi-Brigade and the 1st Hussar Regiment would eventually join the Army of Italy, together with the 31st Provisional Demi-Brigade, which arrived from Germany.³⁸

While personally caring for every detail of the reorganization of the army, in July, Eugène traveled throughout the concentration area, taking time to inspect the coastal defenses from Venice to Trieste and the naval forces.³⁹ He also sent his geographer, the Italian Visconti, to the Illyrian provinces to make an accurate reconnaissance of the position of Villach as well as of the roads and the mountain passes connecting the Sava and the Drava Valleys. That was the area he had planned to occupy with his first line as soon as his forming divisions were ready to march off.⁴⁰

FIUME (RIJEKA) FALLS TO THE ENGLISH

Eugène's concern about his vulnerability to naval attack was not misplaced. The Royal Navy had an unimpeded run of the Ligurian, Tyrrhenian, and Adriatic

Seas, all of which washed the shores of the Italian Peninsula. They made numerous demonstrations, now near Ravenna, now near Venice. On 2 July, two British ships-of-the-line, two frigates, and a brig under Admiral Fremantle arrived before Fiume (Rijeka), which was defended by four batteries armed with 15 large-caliber guns.

The following day, the British landed a force of 500 to 600 men. The guns on the city walls were soon silenced by the bombardment of the fleet. The 350 Croats of the 2/2nd Croatian Regiment charged with defending the city fled with their officers and the local governor of the city. The British seized 43 merchant vessels, large quantities of food, and material, which they hauled away or destroyed.

On 4 July the British expedition reembarked, spiking 59 cannons, which they then threw into the sea.⁴¹

EUGÈNE MOVES TO PROTECT ILLYRIA AND DALMATIA

With the British raid on Fiume (Rijeka), Eugène was forced to move to defend his coasts. Four battalions of the 4th Italian Légère Regiment were already in Dalmatia with the 3/4th in Cattaro, the 4/4th in Ragusa, the 2/4th in Spalato with two companies in Lesina, and 1/4th in Zara. The elite companies were broken off these four battalions and organized in Zara into a battalion of converged grenadiers and one of converged voltigeurs. The 1st and 2nd Elite Battalions of the 4th Italian Line were then sent to Fiume (Rijeka) to reestablish French control of the city.

Four of the six Croatian battalions were still in Illyria, not including the regimental depots. They were deployed with the 1/3rd Croat in Cattaro, the 2/4th Croat in Ragusa, the 2/1st Croat in Zara, and the 2/2nd Fiume, which had fled from the British with its detachment of three companies on the Quarnero Islands. The two other Croatian battalions, the 2/5th and 2/6th, had been assigned to the Reserve Division at Montechiari. This done, Eugène felt that French control in Dalmatia, despite the repeated British raids against the islands near Zara and Cattaro and the growth of popular discontent in Montenegro, was reestablished and secure.⁴²

AUSTRIAN ACTIVITY ON THE NORTHERN ITALIAN BORDER

If Eugène had organized his new army almost from scratch, so, too, had the Austrians. The Hilfkörps, under Prince Schwarzenberg, had taken part in the Russian campaign operating on the southern flank and had since returned to homeland, but in the spring of 1813, Austria had no army ready to be called up on war footing. This was due mostly to restrictions in organization and number imposed by the French after the war of 1809, as well as severe cuts to military

expenditures proposed by Austrian finance minister Wallis and accepted by the Austrian emperor over Metternich's harsh opposition.

By mid-spring, however, restless diplomatic exchanges between the Allied powers and the Habsburg house had significantly increased the probability that Austria would participate in the coalition against Napoleon. It soon became apparent that, as dictated by a long-standing strategy, Austria would probably wage war on its two traditional fronts, Germany and Italy.

In the beginning of May, the Austrian emperor ordered that an army of 120,000 men be formed under the command of Prince Schwarzenberg to cooperate with the Russian and Prussian armies in Germany. The Army of Bohemia would absorb the *Hilfkorps* and the units then being organized in Bohemia and Galicia.

With the offensive army forming, Prince Schwarzenberg suggested the creation of another army to defend the homeland. By the mobilization of all remaining war units, he expected to raise a force of 50,000 men, plus another 14,000 men to be kept in Vienna as a reserve. These forces were to become the backbone of the army that fought against Eugène in Italy. Finally, Schwarzenberg believed that another 60,000 infantry and cavalry could be organized by completing the depot battalions and squadrons and used for garrison duties throughout the empire as well as to form a small reserve army in Galicia.⁴³

At the beginning of June, the Austrian emperor ordered that the *landwehr* be mobilized.⁴⁴ Two weeks later, he issued instructions for a new organization of the Austrian military. Besides the steadily growing Army of Bohemia, two reserve corps were to be formed. The 1st Reserve Corps, under the command of Prince de Reuss, who was to report to Prince Schwarzenberg, would contain 43 battalions and 44 squadrons drawn from Lower and Upper Austria, Galicia, Hungary, Moravia, Slavonia, and Banat. The 2nd Reserve Corps was to draw its troops from Inner Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Galicia, and Slavonia. Its 31 battalions and 40 squadrons would be assigned to FZM Hiller. Finally, 11 battalions of *landwehr* out of a total of 22 were to be put on active service.⁴⁵

In Galicia, not only was the *landwehr* being organized, but reserve battalions were being constituted. Austria mobilized a further 21,250 men. Each of the recruiting districts of the seven infantry regiments in Galicia formed a new six-company battalion, with a strength of 1,080 men, and a depot of two companies with a further 400 men. Moravia had 12 regiments organizing in each of the half districts, a battalion with 4 companies (720 men strong), and a depot company of 210 men. By July, 48,982 reservists and *landwehr* were called to arms.⁴⁶ These war preparations did not go unnoticed by Eugène. On 26 June, for example, an intelligence report informed him that at the beginning of the month masses of Austrian troops were concentrating (12,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry, and 1,500 artillery) in the city of Graz, plus a further 20,000 men in its environs. About half these troops were conscripts.⁴⁷ The Austrians, in turn, were informed about the French movements in Friuli.

The initial Austrian deployments along the empire's southern border were