From Berlin to Leipzig: Napoleon's Gamble in North Germany, 1813

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Abstract

This article examines Napoleon's desperate scramble in 1813 to preserve French dominance in Europe by closely scrutinizing his operations and strategy. Instead of concentrating his forces for a decisive showdown with the enemy's main force, Napoleon repeatedly detached large numbers of troops under ineffective commanders to capture the Prussian capital of Berlin. The heavy losses and strategic reverses sustained by the French in these questionable undertakings left Napoleon's *Grande Armée* vulnerable to the massive Allied coalition that would confront him at Leipzig. This study of French military operations in North Germany highlights the breakdown of Napoleonic strategy in 1813, and demonstrates that the Allied defense of Berlin in 1813 played a significant role in Napoleon's ultimate expulsion from Germany.

IN early May 1813, Napoleon Bonaparte launched a campaign to restore French dominance over Central Europe in the wake of his disastrous war in Russia the previous year. On 2 May at Lützen, he defeated the main Russo-Prussian army in western Saxony. Shortly after this victory, Napoleon ordered Marshal Michel Ney to lead 84,000 men against Berlin, the capital of the Emperor's former ally, Prussia. This operation

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ended in failure when Ney mistakenly reversed his march in an attempt to reach the battle of Bautzen with his entire army. On 22 May at Bautzen, Napoleon defeated the main Allied army for the second time in less than a month. Shortly after, Marshal Nicolas Oudinot resumed the operation against Berlin with a smaller force of 25,000 men. As the main Allied army retreated to Silesia, only one corps of 30,000 men, commanded by the Prussian General Friedrich Wilhelm von Bülow, stood between Oudinot and Berlin. On 4 June, Bülow defeated Oudinot in a hard-fought engagement at Luckau. All operations then ceased when both commanders learned that an armistice had been signed at Pläswitz.

After negotiations failed to end the war, hostilities recommenced on 17 August. To begin the autumn campaign of 1813, Napoleon placed the 67,000-man Army of Berlin under Oudinot's command to resume the offensive against the Prussian capital. On 23 August, Oudinot's operation ended in defeat at Groß Beeren, just twelve miles from the gates of Berlin. Despite Oudinot's rebuff, the emperor ordered another operation against the Prussian capital and again entrusted Ney with his pet project. On 6 September, the Allies routed Ney's troops from the fields around Dennewitz, approximately forty miles south of Berlin; this victory ultimately set the stage for the epic struggle at Leipzig in October.[1]

Napoleon's excessive and misplaced belief in the value of Berlin raises fundamental questions regarding the operational art of war and strategy. At a time when he needed all of his forces to destroy the main Allied army in Saxony, why did he allocate resources to a secondary theater? Why was his attention fixed on North Germany when his own principles of war demanded the annihilation of the main enemy army? Was it more profitable for Napoleon to allocate force to pursue a geographic objective rather than his adversary's army? Did Napoleon violate his own military maxim of minimizing the value of political objectives? Was Berlin the Allied center of gravity in 1813? Would the fall of Berlin make the enemy coalition any more vulnerable? Finally, did vengeance or a deep hatred of Prussia influence Napoleon's strategic planning?

author also thanks Fermand Garlington and Brian Sherman of the Noel Library at Louisiana State University in Shreveport for diligently obtaining books on the shortest notice.

1. Berthier to Ney and Berthier to Oudinot, 2 September 1813, Correspondance du Major-général Berthier, en exécution des ordres de l'Empereur, Carton C^{17} 180, Service historique de l'armée de la terre, Château de Vincennes, MSS (hereafter AAT), Archives de la guerre, France; Napoleon to Ney, 4, 6, and 13 May 1813, *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier, publiée par l'ordre de l'Empereur Napoléon III* (Paris: Henry Plon, 1868), Nos. 19956, 19972, 20006, 24:264–65, 273–74, 292–93; Napoleon to Berthier, 24 May 1813, ibid., No. 20037, 25:312–13; Napoleon to Oudinot, 12 August 1813, ibid., No. 20365, 26:37–38; Napoleon to Berthier, 2 September 1813, ibid., No. 20502, 26:162–63.

Napoleon and Prussia

Between 1795 and 1805, Prussia pursued an official policy of neutrality. After French First Consul Napoleon Bonaparte engineered agreements with the German states in 1801 and 1802, Prussia received 7,440 square miles with a population of some 900,000 in Westphalia and Thuringia as compensation for the 1,674 square miles and 125,000 subjects that had been lost to French expansion along the left bank of the Rhine during the Revolutionary Wars. Bonaparte not only solved the issue of compensation, but also initiated the long overdue process of reorganizing the long-defunct Holy Roman Empire. For the Prussians, a good agreement had been struck with Bonaparte, since the First Consul had fatally undermined Austrian influence over German affairs. Nevertheless, Austria's decline did not facilitate Prussian ascendancy over Germany. In fact, French encroachments in Germany directly challenged Prussian interests. Berlin soon discovered the fallacy of the old adage "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," for although Austria had been displaced as the dominant power in Germany, France rather than Prussia now assumed leadership over German affairs.

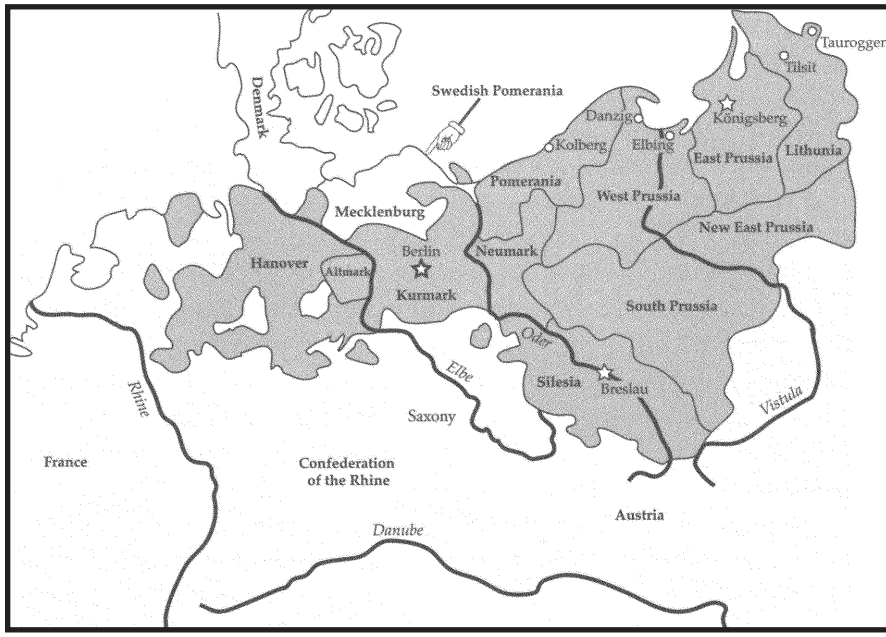
The year 1805 found Austria, Russia, and Great Britain at war with Napoleon, who had recently crowned himself Emperor of the French. Disillusioned with Bonaparte and incensed by the French army's violation of Prussian neutrality during the Ulm campaign, King Frederick William III of Prussia signed the 3 November 1805 Treaty of Potsdam with the Russian Tsar Alexander I.[2] Frederick William agreed to serve as an armed mediator between Napoleon and the Emperors of Russia and Austria. The treaty demanded a complete French withdrawal from Italy and Switzerland; the separation of the French and Italian crowns; and the evacuation of French forces in Germany, Holland, and Naples. A force of 180,000 Prussians would join the ranks of the Third Coalition should Napoleon refuse to withdraw behind his natural frontiers within four weeks. However, Napoleon's decisive victory at Austerlitz one month later smashed the Third Coalition before the Prussians could deliver their ultimatum. Aware of the Potsdam Treaty, an unforgiving Napoleon met with Prussian Foreign Minister Count Christian von Haugwitz in Vienna shortly after Austerlitz. After berating him for his master's "treachery," the emperor forced Haugwitz to sign the Treaty of Schönbrunn, which reduced Prussia to a mere French satellite. Bonaparte also ordered the Prussians to annex officially the Electorate of Hanover—the homeland of the British royal family—in order to maneuver Berlin into France's war with Great Britain. Hoping to renegotiate after the disaster

2. French Marshal Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte marched his corps through the Prussian territory of Ansbach during the Ulm campaign; the Prussians responded by occupying Hanover, a French possession since 1803.

in Vienna, Haugwitz met with Napoleon two months later in Paris. Enraged over Frederick William's apparent ingratitude, the emperor presented the more stringent Treaty of Paris, which required Prussia to close the North German coast to all British shipping and commerce. With French forces already in Germany and his own army partially demobilized, the Prussian king had no choice other than to ratify the treaty on 3 March 1806. One month later the British responded by blockading the mouths of the Elbe and the Weser Rivers. On 20 April 1806, Great Britain finally declared war on Prussia.

Later that year, Napoleon created the *Rheinbund,* or Confederation of the Rhine, which consisted of sixteen autonomous German states united under the protection of the French Emperor. Prussia was excluded from this new French-dominated satellite. Furthermore, Napoleon's vague promises of forming a North German Confederation under Berlin's leadership remained empty, and Frederick William learned that Napoleon had offered to return Hanover to George III if British forces withdrew from Sicily—their main base for operations against Joseph Bonaparte's Kingdom of Naples. A hawkish anti-French party, the army's outrage, and Frederick William's own refusal to become Napoleon's puppet finally pushed the king to declare war on France in September 1806. In the twin battles of Jena-Auerstädt on 14 October 1806, the French crushed both the Prussian army and the legacy of Frederick the Great. Less than two weeks later, Napoleon entered Berlin. Continuing the war despite the loss of his capital, Frederick William fled to Königsberg with a handful of stragglers to meet the approaching Russians. The fall of Magdeburg and its 22,000-man garrison on 6 November highlighted the series of calamities and feeble surrenders that brought the Jena campaign to an end. In a little over one month of fighting, the Prussians lost 165,000 men.

Although some Prussian auxiliaries helped the Russians check Napoleon in East Prussia at the battle of Eylau on 7–8 February 1807, the Russians sought terms after their defeat at Friedland on 14 June. Eleven days later, peace talks between the French and Russians began on a raft moored in the middle of the Niemen River not far from Tilsit. After two weeks of negotiations, Alexander and Napoleon signed the Treaty of Tilsit on 7 July 1807. This Franco-Russian treaty stipulated that Alexander would participate in Napoleon's Continental System by closing his ports to British shipping in return for French support of Russia's war against the Ottoman Empire. The Tsar also accepted Napoleon's plan to create the Grand Duchy of Warsaw by stripping Prussia of the Polish territory gained in the Partitions of 1793 and 1795. Two days later, on 9 July 1807, a dejected Frederick William concluded his own peace with Napoleon. Alexander intervened to save Silesia for Prussia, but the Franco-Prussian Treaty of Tilsit diminished Prussia to a third-rate power. Prussia's prewar



Prussia in 1806.

population of 9,752,731 inhabitants shrank to 4,938,000, and the state's 5,570 square miles were reduced to 2,877. In addition to being stripped of new Prussian Poland, Frederick William lost all territory west of the Elbe.[3] Danzig became a free city under French authority, and French troops occupied the three great fortresses on the Oder River—Glogau, Küstrin, and Stettin—until the Prussians paid an indemnity of 140 million francs.[4] Berlin also had to cover the costs of provisioning the imperial garrisons that would be spread throughout Prussia and of maintaining the imperial highways that would be built to connect the Grand Duchy of Warsaw with the *Rheinbund,* an estimated total cost of

3. The Prussians lost the provinces of New East Prussia and South Prussia to the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, but kept West and East Prussia. Most of Prussia's western possessions, which included the Universities of Duisberg, Erlangen, and Halle, went to Jérôme Bonaparte's new Kingdom of Westphalia, or to the Grand Duchy of Berg.

4. Napoleon did not set this specific amount until August 1808; the Prussians paid it in full by 5 November 1808. John F. Weinzierl, "Marshal Victor as Governor of Berlin," *Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, 1750–1850: Selected Papers* (1996): 216; *Napoleon's Conduct towards Prussia since the Peace of Tilsit, from the Original Documents Published under the Authority of the Prussian Government* (London: H. Colburn, 1814), 9–10.

216 million francs.[5] Finally, Tilsit forced Berlin into Napoleon's new Continental System, which devastated the Prussian economy.[6]

Prussia's humiliation did not end with the signing of the Treaty of Tilsit. Four months after the Spanish insurrection of 2 May 1808, Napoleon forced another Treaty of Paris on Frederick William. Reflecting the growing French commitment in Iberia, the new treaty limited the Prussian army to 42,000 men and prohibited conscription, a militia, and a national guard.[7] Almost four years passed before Napoleon forced yet a third Treaty of Paris on the hapless Prussians. Just as French policy concerning Iberia had adversely affected Prussia in 1808, the rupture between France and Russia similarly affected Prussia in 1812. Franco-Russian relations had steadily deteriorated since the heady days at Tilsit five years earlier. By early 1812, Napoleon was committed to forcefully imposing his will on Alexander. The terms of the 1812 Franco-Prussian Treaty of Paris opened Prussia's borders to imperial troops en route to the Russian frontier. Moreover, Frederick William had to support Napoleon's invasion of Russia with a corps of 20,000 men. Similar to 1805, French forces amassed along Prussia's frontier prompted Frederick William to ratify the treaty on 5 March 1812. His endorsement sparked a wave of protest; over three hundred officers—almost one-fourth of the officer corps—left the Prussian army.[8] Never in the history of the Hohenzollern monarchy had a reigning monarch received such clear censure of his policy.

The Sixth Coalition

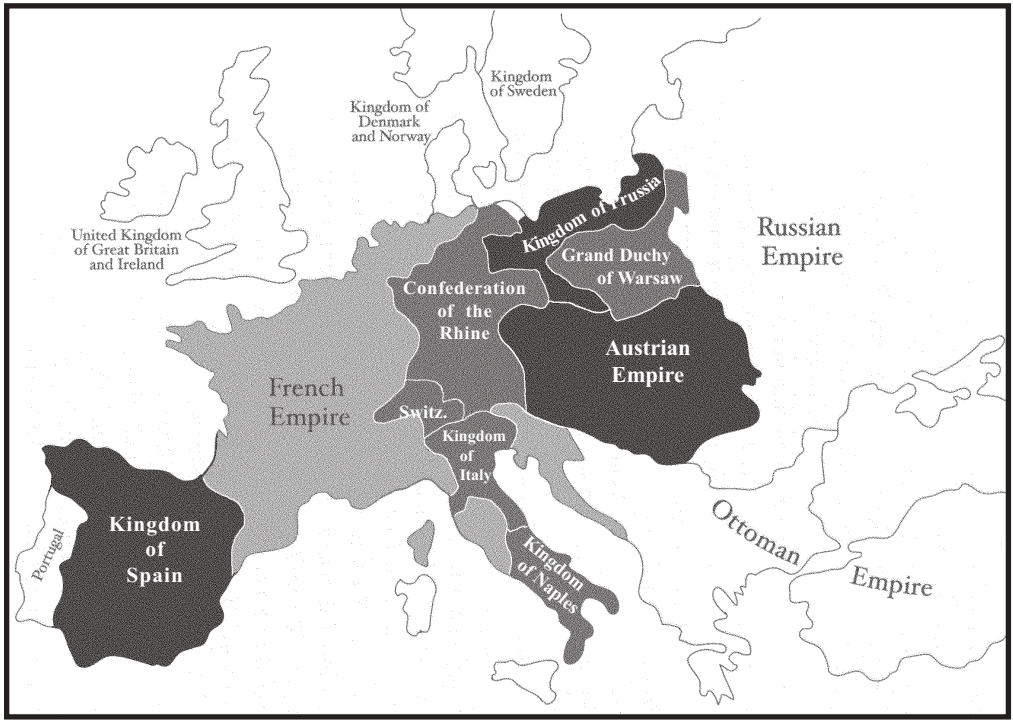
On 24 June 1812, perhaps the finest European army ever assembled crossed the Russian frontier and embarked on one of history's greatest

5. The Prussians bore the cost of the occupation, which strained the state's poor resources. According to historian C. B. A. Behrens, of the 5,846 children born in Berlin between 1806 and 1808, 4,300 died in infancy, presumably of sickness and malnutrition. French requisitions bankrupted thousands of businesses and peasants. Behrens, *Society, Government, and the Enlightenment of Eighteenth-Century France and Prussia* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), 191; Martin Kitchen, *A Military History of Germany* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1954), 38.

6. The price of imports such as cotton, sugar, tobacco, and coffee rose sharply, while Prussian exports of grain, wood, wool, and Silesian linen declined sharply. Both the linen and silk industries fell by fifty percent. Kitchen, *Military History of Germany,* 38.

7. *Recueil des traités de la France, publié sous les auspices du ministère des affaires étrangères* (Paris, 1864–1907), 2:272–73.

8. Gordon A. Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army: 1640–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 58–59; Gordon A. Craig, "Problems of Coalition Warfare: The Military Alliance against Napoleon, 1813–14," in *War, Politics, and Diplomacy: Selected Essays by Gordon Craig* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 41.



Europe in 1812.

military disasters. Napoleon's multinational *Grande Armée* of 1812, almost 600,000 strong with contingents from every continental European state west of the Niemen, descended upon Russia in three army groups. Napoleon himself led the main group toward Moscow. One week after the badly mauled Russian army limped away from the field of Borodino on 7 September 1812, French forces entered Moscow. Finding the Russian capital deserted, the soldiers of the *Grande Armée* enjoyed one night of looting before a great fire swept Moscow on the fifteenth. Unconcerned about the sea of flames that engulfed three-fourths of the city, Napoleon sought to negotiate a peace. Tsar Alexander, however, ignored all French entreaties to end the war. Alexander's intransigence added to Napoleon's concerns over the French army's tenuous lines of communication. Faced with the onset of winter, Bonaparte had two options: take up quarters in the remains of Moscow or retreat. The distance from Paris weighed heavily on the emperor, who feared, and rightfully so as the Malet Conspiracy would soon prove, that his absence

might encourage opposition at home.[9] Although he had conquered half of Russia and taken Moscow, Napoleon ordered the fateful retreat to begin on 19 October. In the ensuing weeks rumors spread through Europe of a French disaster. Despite imperial propaganda, nothing could conceal the *Grande Armée's* dreadful fate. The emperor himself quit the army on 5 December and raced back to Paris to begin the arduous task of rebuilding his forces and mending the strained relations with his satellites. His main army finally staggered out of Russia on 14 December with barely 7,000 men under arms; over two-thirds of the soldiers who had crossed the Niemen six months earlier had been lost.

In the waning days of 1812, general mobilizations occurred in France, the *Rheinbund,* and Italy to replace the men lost in Russia. As early as September, Napoleon had ordered the conscription of 140,000 men in France and 30,000 in Italy.[10] Despite growing bitterness, Napoleon's vassals obeyed. Most of the recruits had already reached their depots by the time Napoleon returned to Paris in December; basic training ensued during the march to the front. Awaiting the arrival of these reinforcements, French commanders in the East struggled to organize the remnants of the *Grande Armée* into a first line of defense to stop the pursuing Russian army.[11] Although far from the front, Napoleon believed that with Prussian support, his commanders could hold the Russians at the Niemen. The Prussian contingent, commanded by General-Lieutenant Hans David von Yorck, had participated in the siege of Riga as part of Marshal Jacques Macdonald's 10th Corps. Although Macdonald's troops had not suffered like those that had retreated from Moscow, the 10th Corps had not yet reached the Niemen. For this reason, Napoleon requested the mobilization of a second Prussian corps to help stop the Russians at the frontier.[12]

9. After claiming that Napoleon had died in Russia, General Claude François de Malet attempted to form a republican government in Paris. Although many imperial officials believed him, the Military Governor of Paris demanded proof. A deranged Malet, who had just escaped a private mental institution, shot the Military Governor. Malet and his fellow conspirators were arrested, tried, and executed only six days after initiating the coup.

10. Napoleon to Maret, 23 September 1812, *Correspondance,* No. 19218, 24:226–27.

11. French losses had been most severe in the army that had retreated from Moscow. Marshal Louis Davout's 1st Corps, which had numbered 66,345 officers and men in June 1812, had barely 2,300 men left after six months of campaigning. Of the 50,000-strong Imperial Guard, only 500 remained fit for service. The combined strength of the 1st, 2d, 3d, and 4th Corps had been over 125,000 men in June 1812; their musters now totaled 6,400 effectives. Unfit for field service, these survivors garrisoned Stettin, Küstrin, Glogau, and Spandau. F. L. Petre, *Napoleon's Last Campaign in Germany, 1813* (London, 1912; reprint ed., London: Greenhill Books, 1992), 9.

12. Napoleon to Frederick William, 14 December 1812, Nr. 27, Nachlaß Albrecht, Rep. 92, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz zu Berlin (hereafter cited as

In Berlin, Frederick William wanted to take advantage of Prussia's increased importance and possibly mediate a Franco-Russian peace rather than exploit Napoleon's setback.[13] Prussian Chancellor Karl von Hardenberg, however, saw an opportunity not only for Prussia's liberation, but also for territorial expansion in Germany, and possible political hegemony over all of North Germany. He went along with the pro-French party to gain time but recognized that the moment had arrived to renounce the hated French alliance and join the Russians.[14] His goal ultimately became intertwined with that of the army: getting Frederick William to take a stand. Although Prussia was hardly prepared either militarily or diplomatically for war, the army took matters into its own hands. Since October, the Russians had been urging Yorck to defect. He informed Frederick William of the Russian proposals, but received no instructions. Yorck met with the Russian commander on 30 December just twenty-five miles east of the Russo-Prussian border, where he signed the Convention of Tauroggen. The Convention neutralized his corps, enabled Russian troops to enter East Prussia unopposed, forced the French to abandon the Niemen, and provided Napoleon with another example of Prussian treachery.

In the wake of Yorck's defection, the Prussian government received numerous reminders to remain faithful to the French alliance. In French-controlled Berlin, the fear that imperial troops might seize Frederick William induced the king to flee to Breslau, the provincial capital of Silesia, which he reached on 25 January. To soothe imperial authorities, the Prussians complied with Napoleon's earlier request to form an auxiliary corps, the importance of which was greatly magnified by the loss of Yorck's troops. Hardenberg assured the French that the new corps would be organized quickly and commanded by Bülow.[15] Napoleon

GStA), Germany; Jean d'Ussel, *Études sur l'année 1813: La défection de la prusse, décembre 1812–mars 1813* (Paris: Plon Nourrit and Company, 1907), 146.

13. As late as 4 February 1813, Frederick William proposed that in return for mediating between the two empires, Prussia be restored to a middle-sized state *between* the Elbe and the Vistula. To entice the belligerents, the Prussians offered East Prussia to Russia, and assured the French continued control of the *Rheinbund*. Napoleon rejected this offer, but the fact that Frederick William was ready to sacrifice East Prussia in return for peace and a partial restoration is telling evidence of the king's fear of war. Frederick William to Hardenberg, 25 December 1812, Nr. 33, Nachlaß Albrecht, Rep. 92, GStA; Paul Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 452–53.

14. On 26 December, Hardenberg wrote that it "is of the utmost importance to show for the present devotion to Napoleon's system and alliances, and to give all our measures the appearance that they are being taken to support France." Quoted in Paul Sweet, *Wilhelm von Humboldt: A Biography* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980), 2:120.

15. Hardenberg to Saint-Marsan, 13 and 15 February 1813 in D'Ussel, *La défection de la prusse,* 254–56.

expected the Prussians to fight the Russians, but became concerned that rebels controlled Frederick William's army.[16] Made wary by Yorck's defection, he placed Bülow's corps under the command of Marshal Claude Victor.[17] Acting on the orders of his king, Bülow refused to obey Victor's commands; instead, his corps simply melted into the wilderness of Pomerania. Bülow's defiance convinced the French that another Prussian general had defected.[18] Uncertainty over Prussia's next move, the continued Russian advance, and manpower shortages forced the French to withdraw to the Oder in mid-February. Without Bülow's support, the French could not hold the Oder either. Expecting to receive a Prussian declaration of war at any moment, the French commander, Eugène de Beauharnais, continued the retreat to Berlin on the eighteenth.

While Eugène gave up land for time, direct negotiations between the Russians and Prussians had commenced in early February, but suspicion stood in the way of compromise. Alexander's desire to reestablish the kingdom of Poland under Russian suzerainty emerged as a point of contention. Concessions from both sides finally cleared the way for the signing of the Treaty of Kalisch on 28 February and the formation of the Sixth Coalition. In this much-anticipated Russo-Prussian military alliance, the Prussians agreed to field an army of 80,000 men to assist a Russian contingent of 150,000. Alexander vowed to restore Prussia's pre-Jena material status while Frederick William acknowledged that he would cede much of his Polish territory to Russia in return for compensation in Germany. The British did their part to bolster the new coalition by reestablishing diplomatic relations with the Prussians and promptly dispatching fifty-four cannon along with arms and ammunition for 23,000 men to be divided between the Russians and Prussians.[19]

The Armies

The burden of waging war in Central Europe fell on the Russians in this early stage of the contest. After suffering 250,000 casualties in the defense of the Motherland in 1812, the Tsar's front-line army consisted

16. Hatzfeld to Hardenberg, 29 January 1813, in Wilhelm Oncken, *Österreich und Preußen im Befreiungskrieg* (Berlin: G. Grote, 1876–79), 1:94; Napoleon to Maret, 10 February 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 19565, 24:510; Napoleon to Eugène, 10 February 1813, ibid., No. 19567, 510.

17. Napoleon to Eugène, 8 February 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 19558, 24:502.

18. MF 19 Dossier Marshal Victor, AAT; Eugène to Napoleon, 15 February 1813 in Eugène de Beauharnais, *Mémoires et correspondance politique et militaire du prince Eugène,* ed. and annotated by Baron Albert du Casse (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1858–60), 8:358.

19. Rory Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807–1815* (London: Yale University Press, 1996), 248.

of only 51,745 men, 12,283 Cossacks, and 439 guns when it crossed the Prussian frontier. Reinforcements, not expected to reach the front until the beginning of April, amounted to 12,674 men, 2,307 Cossacks, and 48 guns. Russian second-line troops—56,776 men, 9,989 Cossacks, and 319 guns—besieged the Vistula and Oder fortresses.[20] A reserve of 48,100 men was assembling in Russia. Directly opposing the Russian front line, Eugène fielded a force of 44,110 men and 81 guns. French garrisons stranded on the Elbe, Oder, and Vistula, and in the Grand Duchy of Warsaw totaled 69,250 men.[21] By February, Eugène had 80,000 men in the field. One month later, he was able to deploy 113,360 men and 185 guns to confront the smaller Russian army. Additional French reinforcements between the Rhine and the Elbe amounted to 142,905 men and 320 guns.[22]

As the Russians labored to move their exhausted army to the front, several factors hampered Prussian mobilization in January and February. French troops still held all of Prussia's significant fortresses and occupied half the country. Moreover, the diplomatic front had to be secured before the concentration of the field army could begin. For this reason, Frederick William delayed issuing a formal declaration of war against France until 16 March to allow the army more time to mobilize. Mobilization of the regular army then accelerated, augmented by the 17 March decrees that created a national militia, the *Landwehr.* Of the 127,394 men that comprised the Prussian army in March 1813, only 65,675 men had received sufficient training to be utilized in the field.[23]

For Napoleon, the new year had brought a fresh series of challenges. As French forces in the east steadily retreated, his strategic political-military situation likewise deteriorated. Failure in Russia not only resulted in the loss of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, but also threatened French control of the *Rheinbund.* As Napoleon's prestige plummeted, German nationalists called for a *Befreiungskrieg,* a war of liberation. Prussia's

20. The siege corps of Stettin, Küstrin, and Glogau totaled 2,280 men, 1,570 Cossacks, and 16 guns. The siege corps of Danzig and Thorn numbered 21,289 men, 3,687 Cossacks, and 155 guns. A third group, which operated in the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, included the siege corps of Modlin, Zamosc, and the Warsaw garrison—a total of 27,115 men, 425 Cossacks, and 148 guns. Ottomar Osten-Sacken und vom Rhein, *Vom Niemen bis zur Elbe,* vol. 1 of *Militärisch-politische Geschichte des Befreiungskrieges im Jahre 1913* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler, 1903), and D'Ussel, *La défection de la prusse,* 360.

21. "Situation," 13 March 1813, Carton 1651, AF IV, Archives Nationales. At Stettin were 7,715 men and 148 guns; Küstrin 3,372 men; Spandau 2,926 men; Glogau 4,501 men; Thorn 3,908 men; Danzig 27,328 men; Modlin 4,300 men; Zamosc 4,000 men; Czenstochau 1,200 men; Magdeburg 5,000 men; Wittenberg 3,000 men; and Torgau 2,000 Saxons.

22. Ibid.

23. Großer Generalstab, Kriegsgeschichtliche Abteilung, *Das Preußische Heer im Jahre 1813,* part 2 of *Das Preußische Heer der Befreiungskriege* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler and Son, 1914), 162–63, 421–57, 548–51.

declaration of war only added to the complex problems that confronted the French emperor. The situation required nothing short of a masterful campaign that would produce a decisive victory over his adversaries. Napoleon's needs were many. Austria stood as an armed neutral, endeavoring to mediate between Napoleon and his enemies. Despite the dynastic ties between France and Austria due to the marriage between Napoleon and Marie Louise, the daughter of Emperor Francis I, the Austrians could not be trusted. A decisive French victory over the Russians and Prussians would certainly impress Francis, whose multinational state had been ravaged by Napoleon's treaties on four previous occasions. As for the Russians, their councils of war had been divided for some time. While Alexander fashioned himself as the liberator of Germany, his commander-in-chief, Mikhail Kutusov, opposed carrying the war into Central Europe to emancipate the same countries that had supported Napoleon's bid to conquer Russia. Other Russian commanders expressed concerns over their tenuous lines of communication. Crushing the Russian army on the field of battle amid so much disagreement would certainly put the Russians to flight, similar to the 1805 campaign. Little question surrounded Prussia's fate: Frederick William would be fortunate to keep his throne in the event of another Jena.

To achieve such a victory Napoleon had to rebuild his army after the catastrophic losses in Russia. Of the 600,000 men and 1,300 guns of the *Grande Armée* of 1812, only 93,000 men and 250 pieces returned. In a little more than four months, Napoleon employed his unrivaled organizational skills to produce the 140,000-strong Army of the Main. Together with Eugène's Army of the Elbe, French forces amounted to 202,000 men by the end of April. Later combined into the *Grande Armée* of 1813, this new force contained a fair number of veteran units that had not served in Russia, but almost 75,000 French conscripts as well as 40,000 raw recruits from imperial satellites. After losing 180,000 horses in Russia, the cavalry had critical deficiencies; this robbed the army not only of its shock tactics, but also of its eyes and ears. Of artillery, the French had adequately replaced the losses sustained in Russia, but draft horses remained in short supply. Reflective of the army itself, the French officer corps in 1813 also contained strengths and weaknesses. In the senior ranks, the Russian campaign had taken its toll on the aging marshalate. One asset, however, was the army's field-grade officers, most of whom were battle-hardened veterans. As Colonel Charles Louis Marie Lanrezac notes, the *Grande Armée* of 1813 provided Napoleon with an effective fighting force, "but one that suffered from the internal germs of weakness."[24]

24. Charles Louis Marie Lanrezac, *La manoeuvre de Lützen* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1904), 29. Lanrezac would go on to command the French Fifth Army in the

Napoleon, Berlin, and the "Master-Plan"

With an army that raised more questions than it answered, Napoleon needed a brilliant strategy to produce another Ulm, Austerlitz, or Wagram. His planning for French operations in 1813 suggests that he believed a strategy of maneuver in North Germany could produce victory. French operations in North Germany can be analyzed in four phases. The first phase of planning, concluded on 11 March, envisioned a drive across the North German plain to Danzig in order to reassert Napoleon's dominance over Prussia and to rescue the Oder and Vistula garrisons. The emperor noted that "after conducting demonstrations to convince the enemy that I will march against Dresden and into Silesia, I will probably march to Havelberg, reach Stettin by forced marches with 300,000 men, and continue the march to Danzig, which I could reach in fifteen days. On the twentieth day of the movement . . . I should have relieved that place and be master of Marienburg, of the Island of Nogat, and of all the bridges of the lower Vistula."[25] Napoleon based this operation on the belief that he could retrieve in Danzig a significant portion of the survivors of the 1812 campaign; their combat experience would be invaluable to the raw recruits who filled the ranks of the new *Grande Armée* of 1813. Liberating the 10th Corps from Danzig became an important strategic objective, which had to be achieved quickly. In view of this goal, Bonaparte planned to lead his army from the Main River to the

First World War. His sacking by Marshal Joseph Joffre, the French commander, remains one of the most controversial French command decisions of the Great War.

25. "Notes pour le Vice-roi D'Italie," 11 March 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 19697, 25:61–62. Generalmajor Rudolf Friederich, chief of Section II of the Military History Department of the Great German General Staff, claims that the emperor's plan "was only feasible by the complete surprise and total inactivity of his adversaries, as well as by the strength of his own army. But why should [Napoleon] base his calculations on the lack of determination, unity, and mobility of the enemy's commanders? Why should it not be based on Napoleon's energy, his ability to urge his French on to extraordinary deeds? In any case, the moral impression of the sudden appearance of a strong French army on the lower Vistula, almost in the rear of the Allies and threatening their line of retreat, would have been completely extraordinary; its consequences would have been completely unpredictable." According to Generalleutnant Caemmerer, Friederich's colleague in the Military History Department of the Great German General Staff, "had Napoleon accomplished this goal it would have been a fortunate beginning for the campaign." Yorck von Wartenburg claims that this plan "need not fear comparison with his best, either in point of boldness or of brilliance." F. L. Petre comments that an operation in North Germany "at once strikes one as a deviation from the Emperor's general principle of making his objective the enemy's army." R. von Caemmerer, *Die Befreiungskriege: Ein strategischer überblick* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler, 1907), 20; Rudolf Friederich, *Die Befreiungskriege, 1813–1815* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler, 1913), 1:188; Petre, *Napoleon's Last Campaign,* 48; Yorck von Wartenburg, *Napoleon as a General,* ed. Walter H. James (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trüber & Co., 1902), 242, 280–82, 307.

Elbe, unite with Eugène south of Magdeburg, proceed through Pomerania, and across the lower Oder. Caught between the French positions at Stettin and Küstrin, the Russians would be forced to abandon the Oder and retreat to the Vistula.

Although Russia's nominal ally Sweden had a small corps in Rügen which could threaten the left of a French force marching east, a Prussian corps positioned at Kolberg would suffice to hold the Swedes in check. Meanwhile, Magdeburg, Spandau, Küstrin, and the Warthe River would cover his right flank. Once the Russians withdrew behind the Vistula, at least half of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw could be liberated. Also, an operation in North Germany would keep the war far from Austria's borders, even though Napoleon did not believe Francis would break his alliance to aid the Russians. Nevertheless, two other variables fatally undermined this plan. First, Napoleon needed some Prussian support for his plan to work, and by 11 March Prussia still had not declared war on France. Second, after Prussia did declare war, the main Russo-Prussian armies did not advance east along the highway from Danzig, but invaded Saxony by way of Kalisch and Breslau, respectively.[26] Thus, Napoleon had to delay this initial operation, which historian David Chandler labels as the emperor's "master plan of 1813." Most commentaries agree with Chandler's assessment that "although circumstances made it impossible to put it into execution . . . the emperor never forgot it."[27]

Although the first phase of strategic planning ended with the postponement of the "master plan," the objectives that Napoleon considered key to overall French success can be found in his subsequent operations. First and foremost was the suppression of Prussia. After Frederick William's declaration of war in March, Napoleon sought to cripple Prussia through a morale-breaking conquest of Berlin.[28] In the event of an

26. Caemmerer, *Die Befreiungskriege,* 19–20.

27. Pelet refers to this project as *la grande opération sur Berlin et sur le Bas-Oder*. Petre adds that "the scheme was never carried out, though we shall find the emperor recurring to modifications of it later on." Colonel Maude, when describing Napoleon's plan to launch a fourth offensive against the Prussian capital rather than pursue an Allied army into Bohemia in late August, maintains that "Berlin, on the other hand, held out all the fascination of his original northern plan." David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon: The Mind and Method of History's Greatest Soldier* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 875, 878; F. N. Maude, *The Leipzig Campaign 1813* (London, 1908; reprint ed., London: Greenhill, 1993), 204; Jean-Jacques Pelet, "Des principales opérations de la campagne de 1813," *Le Spectateur Militaire* (1826–28): 278; Petre, *Napoleon's Last Campaign,* 47–49.

28. Commentary remains mixed concerning the impact of the fall of Berlin. Colonel Hugo von Freytag-Loringhoven, chief of Section I of the Military History Department of the Great German General Staff and contemporary of Friederich, wrote that the blow to Allied morale that would have been caused by the fall of Berlin cannot be underestimated. Elting and Esposito maintain that "an advance on Berlin

offensive against Berlin, he believed the Prussians would abandon their allies and race northward. In this case, Napoleon planned to destroy the Prussians as they marched to defend their capital.[29] At the very least, should the Prussian army remain in Saxony, a weakly defended Berlin would fall and presumably disrupt Prussian mobilization. Control of the plain between the Elbe and Oder Rivers provided another consideration. By transferring his base of operations northward to Hanover, Brandenburg, or Pomerania, the Elbe and Oder fortresses would protect his right flank.[30] Napoleon's desire to relieve the besieged garrisons on the Oder and the Vistula, and to augment his armies with these French veterans formed another objective.[31] Finally, a drive through North Germany to

would enable him [Napoleon] to maintain a more central position, would exploit the resources of a hitherto largely unforaged area." Yorck von Wartenburg, however, adds that Napoleon "undoubtedly over-estimated the effect that the capture of Berlin would have produced. He expected results from the capture of this geographical point, which in a war a victory over the enemy's active forces alone gives. . . . Hitherto, the guiding principle of Napoleonic strategy had always been to render all secondary resistance useless and ineffective by a blow against the enemy's main body. But now, Napoleon neglects the main army, at the very moment when . . . any blow dealt at it might have broken the bond which united the common interests. Yet he permits an operation of secondary importance to take the place of the main operation." Chandler, however, argues that a Berlin offensive "offered palpable advantages." Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon,* 903–6; Vincent Esposito and John Elting, *A Military History and Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 138; Hugo Freyherr von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Kriegslehren nach Clausewitz aus den Feldzügen 1813 und 1814* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler, 1908), 21; Yorck von Wartenburg, *Napoleon as a General,* 280–82.

29. Napoleon to Ney, 13 May 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 20006, 25:293; Napoleon to Ney, 14 May 1813, ibid., No. 20007, 25:293–94.

30. Pelet, "Des principales opérations de la campagne de 1813," 171–72. Pelet notes that by transferring the theater of war north to the lower Oder and possibly as far as the Vistula, "Napoleon henceforth would not have to be concerned about his flank. He could reconfigure his line of operations by Magdeburg on Coblentz, [and] Düsseldorf."

31. For Napoleon's thoughts on relieving these garrisons as the principal objective of his campaigns, see: "Notes pour le Vice-roi D'Italie," 11 March 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 18697, 25:61–63; Napoleon to Eugène, 15 March 1813, ibid., No. 19721, 25:92–93; Napoleon to Rapp, 5 June 1813, ibid., No. 20088, 25:361; Napoleon to Sorbier, 17 July 1813, ibid., No. 20281, 25:491; Napoleon to Davout, 8 August 1813, ibid., No. 20339, 26:13; Napoleon to Ney and Marmont, 12 August 1813, ibid., No. 20360, 26:34; Napoleon to Oudinot, 12 August 1813, ibid., No. 20365, 26:39; "Note sur la situation général de mes affaires," 30 August 1813, ibid., No. 20492, 26:153–57. Pelet cites Napoleon's letter of 29 July 1813 to General Jean Rapp, the commander of Danzig. According to this letter, which was not published in the *Correspondance,* Napoleon assured Rapp that as soon as the armistice expired, "Our first operation will be to seize Berlin [and] to relieve Küstrin and Stettin. We will promptly establish communications with you." Pelet, "Des principales opérations de la campagne de 1813," 171; see also, Freytag-Loringhoven, *Kriegslehren nach Clausewitz,* 21.

the Vistula would threaten Russian communications that stretched across Silesia and Poland.[32]

The Spring Campaign of 1813

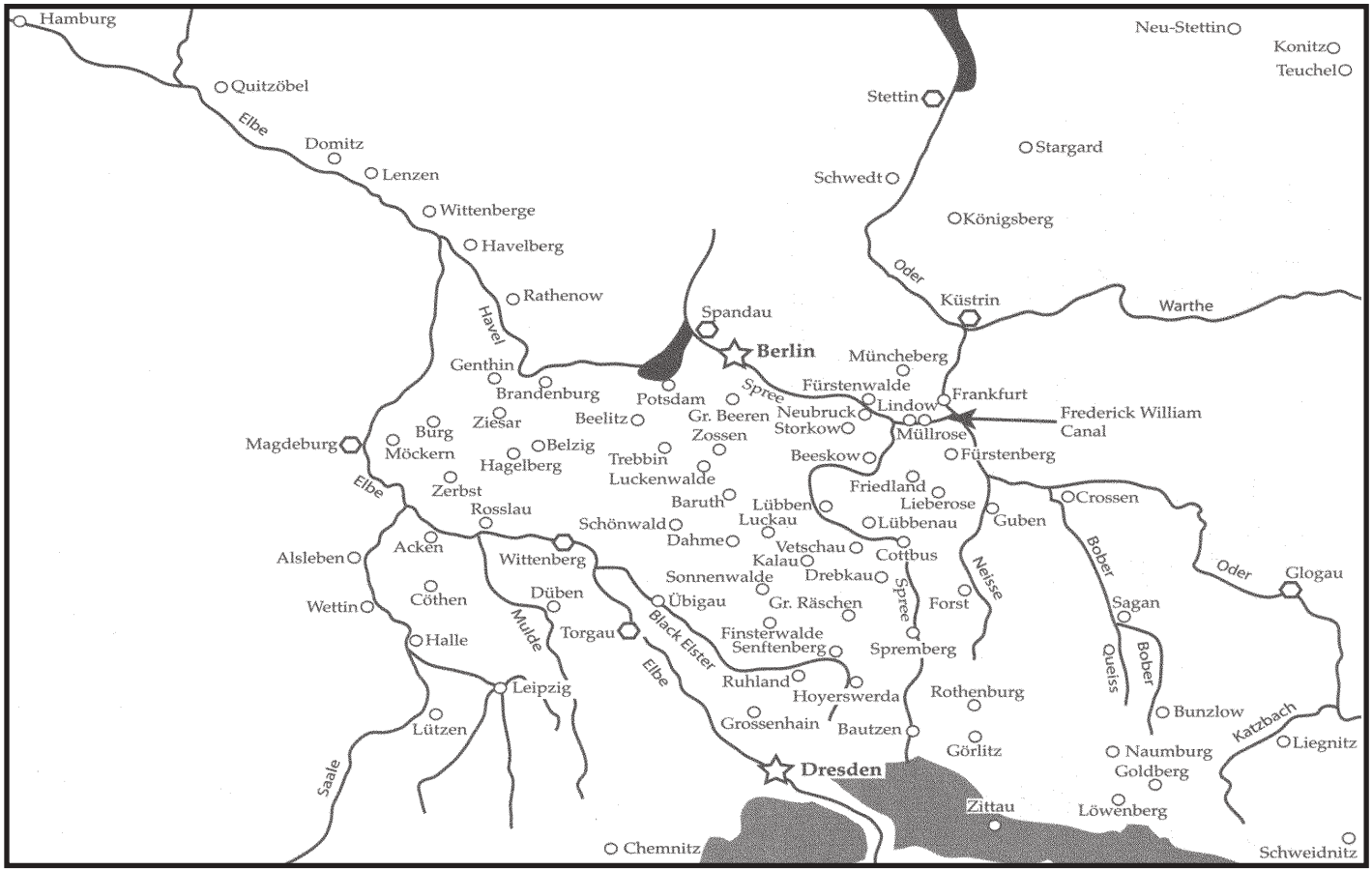
Russian advance troops crossed the Oder and forced Eugène to evacuate Berlin on 5 March. The Viceroy withdrew toward Magdeburg on the Elbe River; Berlin was free from French control for the first time in over six years.[33] Kutusov then ordered a general advance to the Elbe in three main groups. General Ludwig Adolf Peter von Wittgenstein's army of 19,000 Russians, supported by 30,000 Prussians under Bülow and Yorck, formed the right wing. General Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher's force of 27,000 Prussians and 14,000 Russians advanced from Silesia to form the left wing; Kutusov's main body of 30,000 men followed Blücher. Wittgenstein would cover Berlin by striking the Elbe southeast of Magdeburg. As soon as Blücher achieved supporting distance, Wittgenstein would cross the Elbe at Rosslau, and both armies would proceed to Leipzig. The Allies hoped this movement would fix Eugène at Magdeburg and prevent him from attempting to retake Berlin.

The appearance of Allied forces in Saxony in late March prompted Napoleon to concentrate his forces on the left bank of the Saale River throughout April. In this second stage of strategic planning, which culminated in the "maneuver of Lützen," the emperor began his counteroffensive on 30 April by leading 120,000 men across the Saale to confront the Allied army near Leipzig. On 2 May occurred his indecisive victory at Lützen. Two days later, Bonaparte directed Ney to Leipzig with orders to proceed to the Elbe fortress of Torgau, which, along with Wittenberg, provided the gateway to Berlin and North Germany.[34] A successful operation against Berlin followed by a drive to the Vistula offered Napoleon one significant strategic advantage. At Lützen, a shortage of cavalry had prevented Bonaparte from unleashing a deadly pursuit to annihilate his adversary. Perhaps more detrimental to Napoleon was the fact that his weak cavalry arm and inexperienced infantry could not maneuver the Allies into accepting battle under conditions favorable to him. Therefore, the emperor hoped an operation in North Germany would create strategic opportunities that had eluded him in Saxony. Numerically superior French forces would allow Napoleon to place an army in North Germany

32. Pelet, "Des principales opérations de la campagne de 1813," 54, 171, 344.

33. Napoleon to Eugène, 9 and 15 March 1813, *Correspondance,* Nos. 19688 and 19721, 25:46–51, 88–93.

34. Napoleon to Ney, 4 May 1813, ibid., Nos. 19956 and 19958, 25: 264–66; Lanrezac, *La manoeuvre de Lützen,* 185–86. Ney's army eventually numbered 84,300 men, while Napoleon commanded 119,000.



The German Theater of War in 1813.

that was considerably larger than anything the Allies could muster in opposition, while the army under his personal command still outnumbered the principal Allied force in Saxony. He believed that Ney's movement towards Berlin would induce the Prussians to separate from the Russians and march with all possible speed to cover their capital.[35] Napoleon would then leave a force to observe the Russians and, reunited with Ney, he would lead 175,000 men to destroy what he believed to be between 60,000 and 80,000 Prussians as they marched to Berlin.[36] Should the Allied army remain united and again decide to confront Napoleon in Saxony, Ney would still be within supporting distance. In the last scenario, if a united Allied army continued to retreat, Bonaparte planned to drive it out of Saxony, through Silesia, and as far as Poland. Should Ney enjoy success in North Germany, he might reach the Vistula before the Allies, in which case they would be caught between two numerically superior French armies. Although these calculations appeared sound, success could have been attained only by diverting French forces to North Germany and away from the pursuit of, and possible battle with, the main Allied army in Saxony.

Ney reached Torgau on the eleventh. In this position, his army of four infantry and one cavalry corps could pursue three objectives. First, Ney would prevent the Allies from making a stand on the upper Elbe. Second, his march to Torgau would signal to the Allies the preliminaries of an advance against Berlin, which Napoleon hoped would prompt the Prussians to march to Berlin. Third, Ney was in position to launch a relief operation to Danzig. Yet, in the days following Lützen, Napoleon could not be sure if the Allied army remained united or if the Prussians had abandoned the Russians. Regardless of his uncertainty, the emperor selected three main objectives that he wanted achieved by month's end: occupy Berlin, relieve Glogau on the Oder, and take Breslau. He held Ney's operation as the best means to achieve these goals, and thus ordered him to march to Luckau, halfway between Berlin and Bautzen, to either to strike the Prussian capital or to move into a position to support the *Grande Armée* in Sax-

35. As of 13 May, Napoleon instructed Ney that it was "natural" for the Prussians to separate from the Russians, who were retreating toward Silesia, and advance to Berlin to defend their capital. Pelet adds that "the sovereigns of Prussia and Russia had to choose between two great retreat directions. One for the Prussian states and the lower Oder . . . the other, toward Dresden, Breslau, and Warsaw, was the great line of communication for the Russian depots and reinforcements." Friederich adds that "since the Allies had thus far not separated their armed forces, the threat of invading the Mark might succeed in bringing it about." Napoleon to Ney, 13 May 1813, ibid., No. 20006, 25:292–93; Pelet, "Des principales opérations de la campagne de 1813," 54; Friederich, *Die Befreiungskriege,* 1:249.

36. Lanrezac, *La manoeuvre de Lützen,* 177–78.

ony.[37] Twenty-four hours later, confirmed reports arrived that the entire Allied army had marched to Bautzen in two columns. Napoleon believed the Allies would continue their retreat eastward, perhaps as far as Silesia, rather than stand at Bautzen. For this reason, the emperor wanted Ney to continue east, parallel to his route of march, in order to prevent the Allies from making a stand at the Spree, Neiße, Queiß, or Bober Rivers. In addition, Ney could proceed as far as Glogau and sever Russian communications with Warsaw. Consequently, Ney received orders to move the 3d and 5th Corps in the direction of Spremberg—one day's march from Bautzen. As for the other units of Ney's army, the emperor wanted Marshal Victor to take command of the 2d and 7th Corps and General Horace François Sebastiani's cavalry.[38] With this third army group, Victor could destroy Bülow near Wittenberg, proceed to the Prussian capital, and execute the "master plan."

As noted, instead of effecting a split among the Allies, Napoleon found his adversaries in a fortified position around Bautzen on the Spree River. Although the emperor intended to engage the Allies at Bautzen and still move against Berlin with Victor's army, an incompetent Ney frustrated the "master plan" by bringing his entire army south to join the battle. Not only was the operation against Berlin postponed at a time that offered the optimum chance of success, but also Ney's confusion, resulting from Napoleon's less-than-clear instructions, cost the emperor the manpower of his 2d Corps, approximately 25,000 men, which could not reach Bautzen in time for the battle.[39] Consequently, this blunder provides the first and most crucial censure of Napoleon's obsession with the "master plan."[40] The operation failed to achieve its objective and pre-

37. Napoleon to Ney, 13 May 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 20006, 25:292–93; Friederich, *Die Befreiungskriege,* 1:262.

38. Napoleon to Ney, 14 May 1813, ibid., Nos. 20007 and 20008, 25:292–94; Caemmerer, *Die Befreiungskriege,* 27–28.

39. Petre notes these forces "would probably have made all the difference at the battle." Petre, *Napoleon's Last Campaign,* 108. Victor was too distant from Bautzen to reach the battle in time to participate; had Napoleon's orders to Ney been clear, Ney could have pulled Victor's corps southward earlier so that Victor could have reached Bautzen. Conversely, had Napoleon clearly explained his intentions to Ney, Ney could have been ordered to continue on to Berlin, which he was closer to than Bautzen.

40. Pelet, who notes that Napoleon "reserved for Ney the most beautiful gem of the victory—the march on Berlin," defends Napoleon's strategy and concludes that not enough documentary evidence exists to prove that Napoleon actually intended for Ney to march on Berlin. He argues that although the emperor informed both his ambassador in Austria and Marshal Davout that Ney was marching on Berlin, these letters were destined to be shown to the Allies or fall into enemy hands. Moreover, Pelet maintains that such letters did not contain the real objective of the operations. "It was also important to communicate with the Saxon garrison in Torgau," wrote Pelet, "and, (if events allow it) with those of Küstrin and Stettin." Pelet believes that

vented Napoleon from concentrating all of his available forces at Bautzen. Both Ney and Napoleon have received their due share of criticism for their roles in this miscarriage, yet one common theme of French failure in North Germany was the ineffective officers who commanded the operations; Ney's inability to coordinate the "master plan" provided an early lesson that went unheeded.

After another indecisive victory at Bautzen, Napoleon pursued the defeated Allies into Silesia and ordered Oudinot to conduct a second offensive against Berlin. Oudinot marched *northwest* toward Berlin with his 12th Corps while the *Grande Armée* pursued the Allies eastward. The marshal's subsequent inability to dislodge Bülow and secure the Prussian capital on the eve of the armistice also failed to influence the emperor. In contrast to the 84,000 men that Ney had assembled a few weeks earlier, Oudinot commanded fewer than 25,000 men. Nevertheless, Napoleon believed that Oudinot possessed sufficient combat power to drive the Prussians across the Oder and take Berlin.[41] By this time, however, Bülow had been reinforced by reserves and some of the newly raised militia units, and enjoyed a slight numerical advantage over Oudinot. The marshal's only chance for success would have been to isolate and destroy Bülow's brigades once they began to assemble. Thus, with only minimal opportunity to concentrate superior combat power, how did Napoleon expect his marshal to succeed? The answer is that the emperor critically underestimated the combat effectiveness and overall worth of the Prussian troops; he firmly believed the battle-hardened Oudinot would be able to scatter any resistance. Napoleon did concede that the Prussian army had improved greatly since 1806, but he refused

these concerns probably influenced Napoleon's calculations and thus the directions given to Ney. Again, in these plans the march on Berlin, "which writers hurry to criticize as having no motive," is secondary. "Thus," concludes Pelet, "the question of Berlin and its occupation prior to the armistice has never been answered, at least correctly. The order that was supposedly given to Marshal Ney, was never given, even for a part of his corps; while the march from Torgau to the battlefield, prepared since 14 May, was issued and executed day by day . . . from this moment all [of Ney's army] marched rapidly to the great operation [at Bautzen]. This beautiful maneuver, which has been presented as a grave error, was on the contrary, a masterpiece of strategy." Lanrezac counters that "the emperor committed a grave error (*une faute très grave*) by dividing his army to operate against the main Allied army and against the corps that covered Berlin. He committed this error when he ordered Ney to divide his army and send Victor with the 2nd and 7th [corps] and Sebastiani's cavalry to take Berlin and relieve the Oder fortresses. He should have summoned all [of his forces] to Bautzen." Lanrezac, *La manoeuvre de Lützen,* 238; Pelet, "Des principales opérations de la campagne de 1813," 51, 54, 60.

41. Napoleon to Berthier, 24 May 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 20037, 25:312–13.

to believe that the Prussians could match his troops in the field.[42] His contempt for the Prussians undermined the "master plan" and induced Napoleon to recommit the error of allocating numerically inadequate forces against the Allied defenders of Berlin in August and September.

Assessment

During the spring campaign, Napoleon partially resisted the strategy of maneuver so prevalent in the "master plan." Initially, he adhered to the one principle that had brought him so much success in the past: the annihilation of the main enemy army. Once the Prussians and Russians solidified their alliance and launched their offensive, Napoleon turned his attention to destroying their main army in Saxony. Yet, unable to completely disregard his "master plan," Napoleon divided his army for operations against Berlin. The emperor's obsession with Berlin became intertwined with the results he expected from a successful operation in North Germany. Without question, an aggressive move toward Berlin would test both Prussian resolve and the strength of the Allied coalition. Had the Prussians abandoned the Russians in Saxony and raced northward to defend Berlin, the alliance most likely would have imploded. Remembering the fate of their armies in the mountains around Zurich, the Russian reaction to such a retrograde movement by the Prussians might have been to withdraw from the war, just as Tsar Paul had done during the War of the Second Coalition, 1798–1801.[43] Moreover, Russian sacrifices, which included Moscow, had been immense during their own war of liberation the previous year.[44] Fortunately for the Allied war effort,

42. Following Lützen, Napoleon made his infamous comment regarding the performance of the Prussian troops: "*Ces animaux ont appris quelque chose,*" cited in Petre, *Napoleon's Last Campaign,* 84.

43. In the fall campaign of 1799, an Austrian army under Archduke Charles marched to Belgium rather than assist the Russians in ousting the French from their stronghold in Switzerland. Consequently, in the Second Battle of Zurich on 26 September 1799, French Marshal André Masséna crushed a Russian holding force of 30,000 men and then routed another force of 28,000 men commanded by the famed Russian General A. V. Suvorov.

44. At a council of war in Charlottenburg on 17 August, the Russian General Ferdinand von Wintzingerode advised that Berlin be treated like Moscow and that the army covering it should fall back before the advance of enemy forces. This attitude of one Russian general may well have been indicative of the entire Russian high command. Hermann von Boyen, *Erinnerungen aus dem Leben des General-Feldmarshalls Hermann von Boyen,* ed. Dorothea Schmidt (Berlin: Brandenburgisches Verlagshaus, 1990), 2:620.

Frederick William remained committed to fighting Napoleon in Saxony; no Prussian units left the theater to participate in the defense of Berlin.[45]

As for defenders, only Bülow's small corps guarded Berlin during most of April and May, a point that Napoleon should have considered in his assessment of that city's importance to the Allies. By mid-May, Bülow's corps numbered 16,000 men. Although the corps's size doubled by early June, it is unlikely that Bülow would have been able to stop a concerted French operation against Berlin. As for support, the main Allied army's retreat eastward from Lützen left Bülow isolated in Lusatia. It is quite conceivable that Berlin would have fallen to a French offensive, particularly that of Marshal Ney, during the spring campaign. Unquestionably, its capture would have dealt a serious blow to Prussian morale. However, it is difficult to believe that the loss of the capital would have knocked the Prussians out of the war. Frederick William had not sought terms after the French occupied Berlin in 1806. In January 1813, he had fled to Silesia and prepared for war while imperial forces controlled Berlin. For Frederick William, this was a war to the bitter end. Defeat would mean the end of Hohenzollern rule, if not Prussia's complete dismemberment.

A common belief was that the fall of Berlin would have presented a serious obstacle to Prussian mobilization. Careful consideration reveals the opposite. Mobilization orders for the regular army were issued as early as 12 January 1813. At that time, French units moving eastward to meet the slow Russian advance flooded Brandenburg; Berlin was completely under French control. Consequently, the mobilization occurred mainly in Silesia, where the vast majority of reservists and recruits assembled. After the campaign opened, the mobilization of the Prussian *Landwehr* began, but did not proceed in earnest until the armistice of Pläswitz in June 1813, when the army took control of the militia away from civilian authorities. By the end of the armistice on 17 August, the Prussians had managed to double the size of their combat power by combining the *Landwehr's* 149 battalions and 113 squadrons (120,504 men) with the regular army.[46] Berlin's fall in May or early June undoubtedly would have *impeded* a portion of the militia's mobilization, but would not have crippled the entire process. On 15 March, Frederick William had partitioned his kingdom into four autonomous military governments

45. In *Bernadotte and the Fall of Napoleon* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934), 95, historian Franklin Scott claims that "the Prussians likened their capital to a loose woman already so frequently violated that she had no claim to protection."

46. Curt Jany, *Geschichte der königlich preußischen Armee* (Berlin: K. Siegismund, 1929), 4:90.

whose main tasks were to direct the mobilization of the *Landwehr.*[47] The *Landwehr's* decentralized mobilization minimized Berlin's role. In fact, the entire Kurmark province, with Berlin at its center, produced only 26 battalions and 28 squadrons, or 20,560 men.[48] Compared to the 50,000 men provided by Silesia and the 35,000 recruits raised in the provinces east of the Oder, the Kurmark's contribution was not extraordinary. Thus, in order to truly disrupt the mobilization of the *Landwehr,* Napoleon would have had to secure Silesia and the entire region from the Oder to the Niemen.

The relief of the veteran troops besieged in the Oder and Vistula fortresses represents another exaggerated benefit that has been cited as justification for an operation in North Germany.[49] The majority of these garrison troops did not consist of French veterans, but rather of Polish, Lithuanian, Neapolitan, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, Croatian, Saxon, Bavarian, and other assorted German battalions. According to historian John R. Elting, the Oder and Vistula fortresses were "generally weakly garrisoned by the depot battalions of Polish or Lithuanian regiments, lines-of-communications detachments, and provisional units of stragglers and replacements." At Danzig itself, the French commander had a paper force of 25,000 "sick, wounded or exhausted survivors of the great retreat out of Russia."[50] Hardly fit to serve as mobile field troops, these men probably performed a greater service by merely holding their respective fortresses, which required the Allies to allocate their limited manpower to mask or besiege. Moreover, had Napoleon liberated any of

47. Headquartered in Königsberg, Stargard, Breslau, and Berlin, the military governments corresponded to their respective regions: between the Vistula and Niemen, between the Oder and the Vistula, between the Elbe and the Oder, Upper and Lower Silesia.

48. East Prussia contributed twenty battalions and sixteen squadrons; West Prussia: eleven battalions and nine squadrons; Pomerania: twelve battalions and twelve squadrons; and the Neumark: twelve battalions and eight squadrons. See Jany, *Geschichte der königlich preußischen Armee,* 4:90.

49. According to Lanrezac: "Unquestionably, if the situation was as he [Napoleon] imagined and the maneuver succeeded, it offered great advantages. The fortresses on the Vistula and the Oder, which contained immense stores and whose garrisons formed a veritable army of over 60,000, would be relieved, while the enemy army would be weakened from all of the detachments that would be dispersed or destroyed in the path of the French army, which itself would be reinforced by the 40,000 veteran soldiers who occupied the fortresses." Pelet argues that Napoleon could not abandon the fortresses of the Oder and the Vistula, and the brave soldiers that defended them. Hardened by previous campaigns and by the recent sieges, they would have formed an excellent army. Lanrezac, *La Manoeuvre de Lützen,* 96; see also Pelet, "Des principales opérations de la campagne de 1813," 171, 344–45.

50. John R. Elting, "Myths of the Napoleonic Period," in *Consortium on Revolutionary Europe 1750–1850, Selected Papers* (1995): 503.

the fortresses on the Oder and Vistula, he too would have been obliged to assign garrisons to them.[51]

During the spring campaign, Bonaparte based French operations in North Germany on key elements of the "master plan," such as separating the Allies. Yet the Allies remained united, and following Bautzen withdrew under steady combat. As noted, the emperor planned to drive the Allies from Saxony as far as Poland—but would this have brought the French any closer to victory? Had the armistice not been concluded, the Russo-Prussian army could have withdrawn behind the Vistula, where resistance could have been centered around Graudenz and Thorn. The Allied forces besieging the Oder and Vistula fortresses would have rejoined the field army. Additionally, completed units of the East Prussian, Pomeranian, and Silesian *Landwehr* could have moved into East Prussia along with Russian reinforcements.[52] Meanwhile, the *Landwehr* units that were still mobilizing in Pomerania and Silesia could have finished in the fortified camps of Kolberg, Glatz, and Neiße. Behind the French lines, the Prussian *Landsturm* could have played a larger role. Inspired by the Spanish guerrillas, the *Landsturm* could have conducted scorched-earth operations to sabotage and disrupt enemy lines of communication. Consequently, Napoleon might indeed have reached the Vistula, but victory was not guaranteed.

Although the "master plan" appeared feasible in May and early June, when Napoleon's forces outnumbered those of his adversary, the strategy itself was not sound. The emperor's own principles of war, rather than his subordinates' failures, provide the answer.[53] All of Napoleon's strategic planning should have been directed at destroying the main Allied army that operated in Saxony. Any offensive operation should have encompassed the most effective and decisive means of attaining this objective. By annihilating the armed might of his adversary, all secondary objectives such as Berlin would have been attained. Napoleon's overall mission in 1813 was to reassert French hegemony in Central Europe. The emperor possessed the means to destroy the main enemy army and with it the Allied will to fight. Moreover, the terrain of the area of operations meant that the Allied army, confronted by several river crossings during its retreat, eventually would have been caught. In addition, the coalition needed allies. After Lützen, the Prussians and Russians had to prove to the Austrians that the defeat was not crippling. To

51. Lanrezac, in *La Manoeuvre de Lützen,* 96, counters that the "40,000 veteran soldiers who occupied the fortresses" would be replaced by the same number of conscripts—a fair yet untenable argument in light of Elting's research.

52. Caemmerer, *Die Befreiungskriege,* 26.

53. Although maneuver held out an illusory chance of success in the spring campaign of 1813, the violation of the principles of objective, offensive, and mass overrule its benefits.

accomplish this task and to entice the Austrians to join the Sixth Coalition, the Allies confronted Napoleon at Bautzen. Yet Napoleon, in pursuit of the "master plan," had divided his army and thus forfeited mass. Had the emperor retained Ney's army for the pursuit that followed Lützen, he would have been able to concentrate superior combat power at Bautzen. Without question, Napoleon should have put himself in a position to concentrate superior combat power against the main enemy army at the decisive place and time in order to achieve conclusive results.

The Summer Armistice

Diplomatically, the armistice proved disastrous for Napoleon. The British agreed to subsidy treaties with the Prussians and Russians that amounted to £7,000,000. In return, the signatories pledged not to sign a separate peace with Napoleon. To increase Allied combat power in Central Europe, the British also ratified a generous subsidy treaty with Sweden, whose flamboyant adopted crown prince, the former French Marshal Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, had remained idle in Stralsund for the duration of the spring campaign.[54] The Austrians did their part by presenting the Reichenbach protocols to Napoleon as the Allied price for merely initiating serious peace talks.[55] After defeating the Allies at Lützen and Bautzen a few months earlier, Napoleon refused to make any major concessions for peace. With the collapse of their self-serving diplomatic initiative, the Austrians finally joined the Sixth Coalition on 12 August. For the first time in his military career, Napoleon faced the combined efforts of the other European powers.

As the failure of diplomacy made it clear that war would settle the great questions of the day, unprecedented military preparations ensued on the Allied side. For operations the Allied sovereigns adopted the Trachenberg Plan, which called for the formation of three principal armies. The forty-two-year-old Prince Karl Philip zu Schwarzenberg received command of all Allied forces, including the main army—the Army of

54. London granted a £1,000,000 subsidy for 30,000 Swedes to fight on the Continent and naval support in Sweden's war against Denmark for Norway, and held out the possibility of Stockholm's acquisition of the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. Schroeder, *European Politics,* 459.

55. On 27 June, the Austrians, Prussians, and Russians signed the Treaty of Reichenbach, thus authorizing the Austrians to present a minimum program to Napoleon as the Allies' price for a peace conference. The stipulations demanded the partition of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, Prussia's expansion in Poland, the return of the Adriatic coast (Illyria) to Austria, and the independence of only Hamburg and Lübeck in North Germany rather than the entire 32nd Military District. Should Napoleon refuse these terms, Austria would to join the Sixth Coalition with at least 150,000 men and fight for the harsher Allied peace terms.

Bohemia—which consisted of 220,000 Austrians, Prussians, and Russians. Blücher commanded the Army of Silesia—75,000 Russians and Prussians, while Bernadotte took command of the Army of North Germany—120,000 Prussians, Russians, Swedes, and North Germans.[56] According to the Trachenberg Plan, the three Allied armies would form a wide arc around French forces in Saxony and engage only detached enemy corps; pitched battles with Napoleon had to be avoided. Should the emperor concentrate against any one army, it would retreat, while the other two attacked his flanks and lines of communication. The plan aimed to fragment and exhaust French forces. Although Napoleon had the advantage of interior lines, he would be forced to fight against armies advancing simultaneously on his center, flanks, and communications. Schwarzenberg's army would concentrate in the Bohemian mountains and challenge Napoleon in either Saxony or Silesia. Bernadotte's army would assemble south of Berlin, while another 20,000 observed French forces in Hanover. Once hostilities resumed, he would cross the Elbe and march on Leipzig, while Blücher advanced into Saxony from Silesia.

Although the ring did indeed appear to be closing around the emperor, the armistice proved fruitful for the French cause in terms of reinforcing, resting, and resupplying the *Grande Armée.*[57] By the resumption of hostilities, Napoleon could field an army of 421,961 men to face 530,500 Allied soldiers.[58] His own superior generalship was more than enough to balance the Allied numerical advantage. Allied reserves and besieging forces numbered an additional 110,000 men, while Napoleon had 77,000 troops garrisoned in fortresses on the Elbe, Oder, and Vistula.

With a rested and reorganized army, Napoleon contemplated his opening moves. August ushered in the third phase of campaign planning as the emperor had to chose between offensive or defensive operations

56. The Army of Bohemia, including its reserves and guard units, numbered 127,435 Austrians, 78,200 Russians, and 44,907 Prussians; the Army of Silesia—66,401 Russians and 38,484 Prussians; and the Army of North Germany, including the brigades blockading Küstrin and Stettin—91,318 Prussians, 29,357 Russians, and 23,449 Swedes. The Allies created these multinational armies both to prevent Napoleon from defeating them piecemeal, and to limit politically motivated acts of national self-interest. Barthold von Quistorp, *Geschichte der Nord-Armee im Jahre 1813* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler and Son, 1894), 3:1–60.

57. French musters for the first week of June provide proof of the exhausted state of the *Grande Armée* of 1813—nearly 90,000 names filled the sick list.

58. A. J. F. Fain, *Manuscrit de 1813* (Paris: Delaunay, 1824), 230–31; Pelet, "Des principales opérations de la campagne de 1813," 165; Freytag-Loringhoven, *Kriegslehren nach Clausewitz,* 4–5. Pelet's figures for the French army include 312,306 infantry, 69,707 cavalry, 35,528 artillery, 4,087 engineers, and 3,333 staff. Fain puts Allied strength at 420,000 infantry and 110,500 cavalry. Freytag-Loringhoven estimates Allied field forces at 512,000 men compared to Napoleon's 448,000.

for the resumption of hostilities. An offensive against the Allied army in Silesia would not have been feasible since his situation would become completely untenable as soon as the Allied armies in Bohemia and Brandenburg advanced against his rear. A degree of success again appeared to be offered by an operation against Berlin and North Germany. With the loss of Berlin and the transfer of the theater of war to the lower Elbe and the Oder, Prussia, which Rudolf Friederich terms "the emperor's main adversary," would be most affected. Frederick William's resources would decrease in equal proportion as Napoleon's increased. Moreover, the French would subdue northwest Germany, where insurrection and anti-French sentiment were rife. Nevertheless, an operation in North Germany likewise posed difficulties. Should he defeat the Army of North Germany, Napoleon's own role in the offensive had to end after the fall of the Prussian capital. Albeit without the emperor's personal supervision, the operation in North Germany then had to proceed according to the "master plan" so that Bernadotte's Russians and Prussians would be thrown over the Oder and his Swedes driven from the continent, while at least a part of the French army continued on to Danzig. Such an operation would have taken weeks and provided Schwarzenberg and Blücher time to unite, disrupt the French army's communications, and spark rebellion in South Germany. For this reason, unless Napoleon decided to abandon his position in Saxony altogether, he could go only as far as Berlin before his presence would be required in Saxony. Ultimately, a simultaneous strategical and tactical offensive against Berlin and North Germany—in the direction Napoleon wanted—offered a dubious prospect for success. In effect, the situation demanded a strategic defensive.[59]

Nevertheless, the plan Napoleon finally drafted refused to sacrifice the offensive and again ignored the principle of mass. Bonaparte planned to open the campaign with another operation against Berlin, while the bulk of his forces remained echeloned between Dresden and the Katzbach River. Oudinot's Army of Berlin would advance against the Prussian capital, which Napoleon expected to fall by 22 August.[60] To support Oudinot, Marshal Louis Davout would advance from Hamburg to Berlin with the 37,500 men and 94 guns of his 13th Corps. An auxiliary force of 9,000 men commanded by General Jean-Baptiste Girard would operate from Magdeburg in conjunction with 5,000 Poles from Wittenberg under General Jean Dombrowski.[61] Both generals would facilitate

59. Friederich, *Die Befreiungskriege,* 2:42.

60. Oudinot's Army of Berlin consisted of the 4th, 7th, and 12th Corps and the 3d Cavalry Corps for a total of 54,191 infantry, 9,008 cavalry, 4,243 gunners, and pioneers with 216 guns. Quistorp, *Geschichte der Nord-Armee,* 3:63–71.

61. Berthier to Girard, 12 August 1813; Berthier to Lemarois, 13 August 1813; and Berthier to Davout, 13 August 1813, C^{17} 179, AAT; Napoleon to Berthier, 11 August 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 20348, 26:24; Napoleon to Oudinot, 12 August

Oudinot's offensive by uniting, advancing, and forming a link between Oudinot and Davout.[62] Satisfied with the arrangements for the North German theater, Napoleon then revised his plans for the Saxon campaign. Rather than hold 300,000 men in a defensive posture around Dresden, he created another army to facilitate Oudinot's operations and pressure the Allied army in Silesia. Later placed under Macdonald's command and christened the "Army of the Bober," this force consisted of four infantry and one cavalry corps, or 130,000 men and 408 guns.[63] Situated in two lines on the Katzbach and Bober Rivers, this army would shield Oudinot's right flank from the enemy army in Silesia.[64] Thus, Napoleon allocated seven infantry and two cavalry corps for the secondary objective of Berlin.[65]

It is clear that the results Napoleon expected from the "master plan" continued to influence his strategy. Although Austria's accession to the opposing alliance changed the strategic situation considerably, Napoleon still believed that a successful operation in North Germany would have a decisive impact on his operations in Saxony. In August, he hoped that a drive through Berlin and North Germany to at least the Oder, and perhaps as far as the Vistula, would draw the Russians eastward and away from the Austrians. Although the aggressive move toward Berlin in the spring had not induced the Prussians to separate from the Russians, such calculations still influenced Napoleon's planning in August. He continued to believe that a *coup de théâtre* in North Germany would force the Russians back on their lines of communication and provide a test of the coalition's strength. Allied numerical superiority would be balanced by a

1813, ibid., No. 20365, 26:37–38; Napoleon to Berthier, 13 August 1813, ibid., Nos. 20371 and 20373, 26:42–44, 45; Napoleon to Davout, 12 and 13 August 1813, ibid., Nos. 20353, 20357 and 20374, 26:28, 32–33, 47–48.

62. According to Freytag-Loringhoven, "Oudinot was no match for the task he received, and Napoleon placed too much emphasis on the successful cooperation of the three separate groups of Oudinot, Girard, and Davout—in war [the success] of such things is impossible to predict." Friederich adds that due to their distances from Berlin, "the cooperation of these three army groups was only possible in a strategic sense rather than a tactical sense." Caemmerer claims that Napoleon viewed this campaign against the Army of North Germany as a "concentric operation" between the various French army groups. Caemmerer, *Die Befreiungskriege,* 43; Freytag-Loringhoven, *Kriegslehren nach Clausewitz,* 21; Friederich, *Die Befreiungskrieg,* 2:46.

63. Berthier to Poniatowski, 13 August 1813, C^{17} 179, AAT; Napoleon to Berthier, 23 August 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 20442, 26:414–15; Petre, *Napoleon's Last Campaign,* 172. These units included the 3d, 5th, 6th, and 11th Corps, and the 2d Cavalry Corps.

64. Napoleon to Berthier, 13 August 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 20371, 26:42–44; Napoleon to Ney, Saint-Cyr, Macdonald, and Marmont, ibid., No. 29373, 26:45–47; Petre, *Napoleon's Last Campaign,* 172.

65. Napoleon to Berthier, 23 August 1813, *Correspondance,* Nos. 20441, 20442 and 20443, 26:414–18.

decisive victory over the Allied forces assigned to defend Berlin. The prize of such a victory would have been the vast resources of the majority of Prussia. Lastly, the issue of the stranded garrisons in the Oder and Vistula fortresses held the illusory promise of further expanding his ranks with battle-hardened veterans.[66]

The Autumn Campaign of 1813

In less than two weeks after the expiration of the armistice, defeats at Groß Beeren (23 August), the Katzbach (26 August), Hagelberg (27 August), and Kulm (30 August) negated Napoleon's own great victory at Dresden (26–27 August). Oudinot's Army of Berlin, Macdonald's Army of the Bober, and Girard's division were defeated within a span of four days. Bernadotte's Army of North Germany checked Oudinot at Groß Beeren, Blücher's Silesian Army smashed Macdonald's army as it struggled to cross the Katzbach River, and General-Major Karl Friedrich von Hirschfeld's mostly *Landwehr* brigade routed Girard's force as it hurried east from Magdeburg to support Oudinot's operation against Berlin. Careful scrutiny of Napoleon's strategy suggests that these battles never would have taken place had he forced himself to concentrate on the annihilation of the main Allied army, which, by 16 August, he knew to be the enemy force situated in Bohemia.[67]

Oudinot's operation had a well-defined objective, yet Davout, Girard, and Dombrowski failed to achieve their objectives so that when the marshal's army converged on Berlin on 23 August, it faced a numerically superior foe. Moreover, Oudinot's army advanced to Berlin along three roads that ran through difficult terrain and prevented mutual support; his isolated columns were repulsed at Blankenfelde, defeated at Groß Beeren, and held at Ahrensdorf. The demoralizing effects of defeat, however, proved far worse than Oudinot's modest losses.[68] Although his corps only needed a few days to reorganize, the reverse at Groß Beeren completely disheartened Oudinot, who ordered the entire Army of Berlin

66. Pelet speculates that if the Allies had to abandon Berlin and withdraw to the right bank of the Oder, "then our fortresses could be unblocked. The veteran troops of the garrisons, replaced by conscripts, could strengthen the army. These [veterans] could enter on-line as in 1807, covered by the Lower Oder and the fortresses that belonged to us. The war could have then shifted to the other bank of the river, and [we could have] rapidly gained the Vistula, where 50,000 Poles were waiting and ready to arm." Pelet, "Des principales opérations de la campagne de 1813," 171.

67. Napoleon to Macdonald, 16 August 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 20390, 26:69–70.

68. Prussian casualties at Groß Beeren numbered 1,049 men and six guns. French losses amounted to 3,076 men, fourteen guns, and fifty-two loaded ammunition carts. Nr. 97, Rep. 19 A, GStA.

to retreat to the safety of Wittenberg.[69] Unfortunately for Oudinot, his humiliation did not end once his army reached the fortress. The retreat to Wittenberg rather than to Luckau exposed Macdonald's communications and limited Napoleon's ability to pursue Schwarzenberg, since Bernadotte's army was now able to advance to the Elbe and threaten the rear of the *Grande Armée*. A disgusted Napoleon commented that few could be as stupid as Oudinot; a few days later he ordered Ney to take command of the Berlin Army.[70]

As for Napoleon's operations between 16 and 22 August, he led the *Grande Armée* east to destroy Blücher, who withdrew in accordance with the Trachenberg Plan.[71] By 23 August, reports convinced the emperor that the Army of Bohemia, which he knew had been advancing since the seventeenth, was making for his base at Dresden. After instructing Macdonald to push the Silesian Army—which he now correctly estimated at 100,000 men—east of the Bober River to shield Oudinot's operation, Napoleon departed for the Saxon capital.[72] Despite his orders, Macdonald pressed the offensive. While attempting to negotiate the rain-swollen Katzbach, the marshal stumbled into Blücher's Silesian Army on 26 August. Macdonald lost 15,000 men and his army collapsed.

On the following day Girard's isolated division of 8,000 infantry, 900 cavalry, and twenty-three guns encountered Hirschfeld's *Landwehr* brigade in the little-known engagement of Hagelberg, southwest of Berlin. Combat lasted for five hours, during which the musket-butt proved more effective than the bayonet. After Girard fell seriously wounded, the rout began. Under the cover of darkness, the French managed to withdraw, but not before Girard lost 3,000 dead and wounded, 3,000 prisoners, 6,000 muskets, eight guns, twenty powder wagons, and his baggage. Hirschfeld's losses totaled 1,750 men. Hagelberg provided a great victory for the *Landwehr* and rewarded the Prussians for their diligent work during the armistice.[73]

69. Oudinot to Berthier, 26 August 1813, C2 154, AAT.

70. Napoleon to Berthier, 2 September 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 20502, 26:162–63.

71. Napoleon to Macdonald, 16 August 1813, ibid., Nos. 20390 and 20391, 26:69–70. Napoleon actually believed that at most Blücher's army numbered only 50,000 men—almost half of its actual size.

72. Napoleon to Berthier, 23 August 1813, ibid., No. 20442, 26:115–16.

73. Sources for the encounter at Hagelberg include: Friederich, *Die Befreiungskriege,* 2:167–71; Carl von Plotho, *Der Krieg in Deutschland und Frankreich in den Jahren 1813 und 1814* (Berlin: C. F. Amelang, 1817), 2:151–55; Quistorp, *Geschichte der Nord-Armee,* 1:407–22; C. A. von Wagner, *Plane der Schlachten und Treffen von der preußischen Armee in den Feldzügen der Jahre 1813, 1814 und 1815* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1821), 2:93–108.

The individual failures of Oudinot, Macdonald, and Girard do not provide sufficient reason to condemn the emperor's strategy. Indeed, an argument can be made to vindicate the "master plan" and blame his lieutenants. However, Bonaparte's inability to relinquish the offensive, combined with his obsession to initiate the "master plan" with a bold stroke against Berlin, caused these defeats. Napoleon left Macdonald isolated, extended, and exposed in the east with orders to push back the Silesian Army and then maintain a defensive posture to protect Oudinot's flank. Here, Napoleon would have been better served by economy of force. Macdonald's army should have taken a more central position on the Spree River. In addition, the Army of the Bober should have been reduced in size so that the emperor could have concentrated more combat power against the main Allied army during the battle of Dresden. Yet Napoleon believed the offensive against Berlin required a substantial French force to cover Oudinot's right flank. As for Oudinot's failure, he would have had difficulty concentrating sufficient combat power to decisively defeat Bernadotte's Army of North Germany. Once again, economy of force would have better served Napoleon. Despite the advantages that a successful operation in North Germany might have offered, it still remained a secondary theater. A decisive French victory over the main Allied army was still the best and proven means of unraveling the enemy coalition. Thus, the Army of Berlin should not have existed. One corps of 25,000 men in conjunction with Girard's division and Davout's corps would have sufficed to hold the Elbe from Torgau to the North Sea.[74] Consequently, in the case of both Macdonald and Oudinot, Napoleon should have modified their objectives and allocated minimum essential combat power for their secondary efforts. Although Napoleon inflicted over 30,000 casualties on the Army of Bohemia during the battle of Dresden, a decisive victory eluded him and the defeated army slipped away.[75] Had the emperor possessed a few additional corps—the manpower spared by reducing the Army of Berlin and the Army of the Bober—the main Allied army might have been crushed.[76]

The fourth and most controversial phase of strategic planning culminated in the *"Note sur la situation générale de mes affaires"* of

74. See: Auguste Marmont, *Mémoires du Maréchal Marmont Duc de Raguse,* ed. J. B. F. Koch (Paris: Perrotin, 1848–50), 5:140; Freytag-Loringhoven, *Kriegslehren nach Clausewitz,* 26.

75. Here I use the term "decisive" to denote a complete victory that rendered one belligerent incapable of continuing the war as in the case of the battles of Marengo, Austerlitz, Friedland, Wagram, and Waterloo.

76. As the main Allied army retreated from Dresden into Bohemia during the night of 30 August, Napoleon dispatched General Dominique Vandamme's 1st Corps in pursuit. While Vandamme engaged the Russian rearguard, General Friedrich von Kleist's Prussian 2d Corps ran into the rear of Vandamme's column near Kulm. Vandamme, himself taken prisoner, lost approximately 15,000 men.

30 August, in which the emperor considered either an offensive against Prague or another march on Berlin as his next step. Both projects sacrificed the principle of annihilating the main enemy army, which would have provided the most direct means of achieving total victory. Absent from either is discussion of a decisive battle with any one of the three Allied armies. Geographic points dominate the emperor's objectives, similar to the eighteenth-century wars of maneuver. His objections to a march on Prague contain both reasonable military considerations as well as his continued obsession with the "master plan." Since the Bohemian Army would reach Prague before his forces, he could not be guaranteed this geographic objective either. Moreover, by crossing into Bohemia, he would sacrifice his central position and place himself at the end of a line that extended to Hamburg—a line that the same lieutenants who had just suffered defeats would have to hold in order to secure his flank and rear. Another concern was that he would be pushed westwards and forced to campaign between the Elbe and the Rhine. As for his subordinates, Napoleon judged the condition of Macdonald's army to be far more favorable than it was, and he did not want to leave Oudinot's army completely isolated at Wittenberg. It appeared exceedingly risky to leave these two army groups so far north of the Bohemian mountains for any length of time. The Prague operation also meant the certain loss of his garrisons in the Oder fortresses since his army "would not be on the way to Danzig." Lastly, although in his "Note" Napoleon does not view the Prague option as an offensive against Schwarzenberg, it can be inferred that he had convinced himself of the dangers of seeking a decisive battle in Bohemia.[77] At the most, he would be able to assemble only 160,000 men for such an operation—not enough to achieve numerical superiority over Schwarzenberg. Consequently, he could not be guaranteed success in a second battle with the Army of Bohemia. Furthermore, should the Allies avoid a confrontation, both the emperor and the main French army would be further removed from the center of his operations. Although these considerations would have certainly prevented a commander schooled in the eighteenth-century art of war from conducting such an operation, it is hard to believe that the same man who executed the maneuvers of the First and Second Italian Campaigns, as well as those that led to Austerlitz and Friedland, shirked such a challenge. Clearly Napoleon the emperor bested Napoleon the general as political considerations overruled military initiative.

77. This assertion can be based on the fact that on two occasions—in late August after the battle of Dresden and in mid-September—Napoleon considered but rejected the idea of an offensive in Bohemia. On 10 September, the emperor confronted a portion of the Bohemian Army in the Teplitz Valley. Fortunately for the Allies, Bonaparte did not attack. Both armies faced each other for the next few days until Napoleon returned to Dresden.

In justifying the advantages of marching on Berlin, the emperor's "Note" returned to the key elements of the "master plan."[78] A victory over the Army of North Germany and the timid Bernadotte appeared certain. An offensive in this direction would allow him to remain in a central position in the middle of his operation's base and near his magazines. He deemed that the fall of Berlin would produce a moral victory, which would erase the memory of Groß Beeren and the Katzbach, and make a huge impression on the *Rheinbund* princes. The Oder fortresses could be relieved and Davout could clear the way to Danzig. Furthermore, by taking Berlin and driving to the Vistula, Napoleon envisioned the ultimate dissolution of the Bohemian Army. After the loss of their capital, he thought the Prussian contingent of Schwarzenberg's army would depart Bohemia and make for Brandenburg. As for the Russians, they would fall back on their lines of communications once a French army threatened Poland. If Allied resolve proved stronger and Schwarzenberg should hold his army together to lead a new offensive against Dresden, Napoleon would have a force of four corps commanded by his brother-in-law, Joachim Murat, to slow the Allied advance. As for Blücher, Bonaparte underestimated the dissolution of Macdonald's army after its defeat on the Katzbach and so hoped the marshal could hold the Neiße against the Silesian Army. Should his lieutenants succeed, Napoleon predicted that fourteen days would suffice for him to take Berlin, resupply Stettin, and return to the Saxon theater to confront either Blücher or Schwarzenberg. Thus, with the ever-present lure of the "master plan," the emperor decided to allow the Army of Bohemia to recover after its drubbing at Dresden, while he personally commanded the march on Berlin. He planned to lead 30,000 men from Dresden, unite with the Army of Berlin, and resume Oudinot's aborted operation against Berlin.[79]

78. In 1863, the historians of the Historical Section of the Prussian General Staff concluded that "because of the clarity of Napoleon's [Berlin] plan, the observation cannot be dismissed, that its great preference for an offensive against Berlin provides the proof that it had to be the spirit of Napoleon's [strategy] long before." "Die Operationspläne Napoleons von der Schlacht bei Groß Beeren bis zur Schlacht bei Dennewitz," *Beiheft zum Militair-Wochenblatt. Redigirt von der historischen Abteilung des Generalstabes* (1863): 24.

79. "Note sur la situation général de mes affaires," 30 August 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 20492, 26:153–57; Friederich, *Die Befreiungskriege,* 2:200. The implacable Pelet again defends Napoleon's decision: "Napoleon saw the failure of his main project, namely that on Berlin and on the lower Oder, which would have rendered him the master of North Germany and the arbiter of Europe. Oudinot and Macdonald, who cooperated in its execution, had been beaten. The disaster of Kulm negated the victory at Dresden. Meanwhile, Oudinot's army was neither defeated nor broken, it could have continued. It was protected by the indecision of the victor. Napoleon hoped that a daring chief could take Berlin. He wanted to support the operation personally. Placing himself between Bernadotte and Blucher, he

As a result of Macdonald's plea for help, however, Napoleon never had the opportunity to execute the Berlin offensive as planned in his "Note" of 30 August. He neither marched north nor provided reinforcements. Ney, who assumed command of the Army of Berlin on 3 September, never received word of the emperor's change of plans. Therefore, when he began his operation on the fourth, he ordered the Army of Berlin to march eastward in order to unite with Napoleon, who, according to Ney's information, would reach Luckau on the sixth.[80] Instead of his emperor, Ney found the two Prussian corps of the Army of North Germany, which defeated him at Dennewitz on the sixth. This battle once again illustrates the disastrous combination of the "master plan" with officers incapable of independent command. Ney's debacle can be attributed to events in southeastern Saxony, where Blücher maintained pressure on Macdonald's beleaguered Army of the Bober. Not only did Blücher's offensive require Bonaparte's personal intervention in order to save the army, but Napoleon also discovered that the Army of Bohemia was again on the march toward Dresden. Left to his own devices, Ney succumbed to his fiery personality, which cost him victory at Dennewitz, where approximately 45,000 Allied soldiers defeated three French corps commanded by one of the period's most charismatic leaders. Ney's losses amounted to 8,000 dead and wounded, 13,500 prisoners, fifty-three guns, and 412 supply wagons. Large quantities of material and small-arms were left on the battlefield and used to fill shortages in the Prussian *Landwehr.*[81] For all practical purposes, Napoleon's "master plan" had to be abandoned for good in the wake of Dennewitz.

Napoleon's situation became critical after less than one month of campaigning. The success of the Trachenberg Plan depleted the ranks of the *Grande Armée*; the French had lost 150,000 men and three hundred

prepared to defeat the former and to stop the progress of the latter. During the month of September, the emperor sought to resume the execution of this plan; all intelligence indicated increasing advantages. The Poles and even the Lithuanians awaited us. In Austria, the party that had declared war would be easily shaken if the Russians and Prussians were forced to defend their country. Middle Germany would remain all the more faithful. Finally, our blockaded fortresses needed to be resupplied." Freytag-Loringhoven adds that in choosing Berlin over Prague, "success could be far more easily attained if the emperor appeared in the north, reinforced the Army of Berlin with his Guard, and personally assumed command. If he could decisively defeat the North Army and take Berlin, he could relieve Küstrin and Stettin, and even Danzig. Should the Allied army again invade Saxony, he hoped to return there within fourteen days to deliver a decisive blow." Freytag-Loringhoven, *Kriegslehren nach Clausewitz,* 90; Pelet, "Des principales opérations de la campagne de 1813," 344–45.

80. Napoleon to Berthier, 2 September 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 20502, 26:162–63.

81. Nrs. 97 and 100, Rep. 91 A, GStA. Prussian casualties amounted to 9,700 killed and wounded.

guns since the expiration of the armistice—an additional 50,000 names filled the sick roles.[82] While French commanders suffered defeats at Groß Beeren, the Katzbach, Hagelberg, Kulm, and Dennewitz, the emperor raced back and forth between the Elbe and the Bober Rivers in futile attempts to achieve the decisive victory that had eluded him thus far. Under normal conditions the constant marches and counter-marches would have exhausted his conscripts both mentally and physically. Yet the conditions remained far from normal. Heavy rains washed out roads, and Cossacks menaced the lines of communication. Although the poor conditions forced Napoleon to grant his men plenty of rest, the slow starvation of the army could not be ignored. Supply shortages and the exhaustion of the Saxon countryside prompted Napoleon to write: "The army is no longer fed; to view it in any other way would be mere self-deception."[83]

Assessment

In August and September, a bold offensive against Berlin did not offer the same promise of easy success as it had in May or early June, when Bülow's 30,000 men defended the vast area between the Elbe and the Oder. Instead, the new Army of North Germany guarded Berlin. Despite the emperor's calculations and personal feelings, implementation of the "master plan" now required a major French undertaking and a decisive victory. As for Berlin itself, although the psychological impact of its fall would have been much worse for the Allies in August or September than in the spring campaign, possession of the city would have afforded Napoleon no real political advantage.[84] By late August, Berlin would have been nothing more than a geographic point unless Napoleon abandoned Saxony and established a new base in Hanover, Brandenburg, or Pomerania.[85] Moreover, Berlin no longer served any crucial function in the mobi-

82. Chandler, *Campaigns of Napoleon,* 916.

83. Napoleon to Daru, 23 September 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 20619, 26:236–38.

84. According to Friederich, *Die Befreiungskriege,* 2:42, "the capture of Berlin would present only moral rather than material success; like Moscow in the year 1812, Berlin possessed neither strategic nor political value."

85. As for this option, Friederich presents an interesting scenario: "Due to the inability to attack the Russo-Prussian army in Silesia and to the difficulty of invading Bohemia, it would have been more advisable to concentrate the main force along the Magdeburg-Hamburg line, to advance from there, avoid the terrain problems that hindered Oudinot's subsequent offensive, to march against Bernadotte, eliminate this adversary and then, after the whole of North Germany was again brought under French dominion, to proceed from the north in broad front against the enemy arm[ies]. The great decisive battle would be fought in the beginning of September between the Elbe and the Oder, but under essentially more favorable conditions for Napoleon since at this time he would possess an army which equaled the allied army

lization of either the regular army or the *Landwehr*. In fact, the Baltic fortress of Kolberg, rather than Berlin, housed the arms, ammunition, and supplies that arrived from Great Britain.

A purely defensive strategy would have afforded the emperor the best chance for success in the autumn campaign. "It seems to me," wrote Napoleon to his marshals on 12 August, "that to bring about a decisive and brilliant result, the best way is to remain in close formation and allow the enemy to approach."[86] Five days later, he again endorsed a defensive posture, commenting that "no one can turn an army of 400,000, planted on a system of fortresses, on a river like the Elbe, and able to deploy at will by Dresden, Torgau, Wittenberg, and Magdeburg."[87] Yet Bonaparte could not refrain from adding an offensive element to his defensive strategy, mainly an operation against Berlin, which required a considerable force to protect the flank of the army that executed this operation. Consequently, the question once again reverts back to Napoleon's alleged obsession with Berlin, North Germany, and the presumed execution of the "master plan." In August and September, the attempt to implement the "master plan" with the conquest of Berlin as its first objective was simply an error in judgment. Rather than commit significant combat forces to a secondary objective, Napoleon desperately needed to adhere to the one principle that had brought him so much success in the past: the concentration of superior combat power for the annihilation of the main enemy army.

By far, Napoleon's most feasible strategy in the fall campaign of 1813 would have been to exploit his central position. Similar to the Rossbach-Leuthen phase of Frederick the Great's autumn campaign of 1757, had Napoleon maintained a defensive posture, utilized his central position to its fullest advantage, and practiced economy of force with Oudinot and Macdonald, he could have exploited a few key characteristics that had governed previous coalitions. The Allies needed a decisive victory. Eventually, they had to come to him in order to liberate Central Europe. A prolonged war of attrition and maneuver would have deflated Allied enthusiasm. Such a war also might have encouraged the subordination of military goals to politically motivated acts of national self-interest, the bane of previous coalitions. During their councils of war in July, when the Allies formulated their Trachenberg Plan, the Russians and Prussians understood that the collective fate of Central Europe hung in the balance. Despite Napoleon's setbacks in Russia and Iberia, only an unprecedented cooperative effort could liberate Central Europe from French control. Although the Austrians limited Allied war objectives and pre-

in numbers, and whose morale and cohesion would not have been shaken by defeats, hunger, and fatigue." Ibid., 46.

86. Napoleon to Ney, 12 August 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 20360, 26:34–36.

87. Napoleon to St. Cyr, 17 August 1813, ibid., No. 20398, 26:77–78.

ferred caution in order to avoid another Ulm, a combination of prudence and calculated aggression characterized the Allied war effort in 1813. Finally, the continental allies certainly had to consider their British paymaster. In view of Great Britain's tremendous financial investment in the Sixth Coalition, London would not subsidize a prolonged war of attrition in Central Europe, particularly since General Sir Arthur Wellesley was brilliantly executing the new "continental strategy" in Iberia.[88]

After the Russian disaster, loyalty to Napoleon wavered in the courts of his allies and satellites. The fall of Berlin certainly would have ensured continued payment of the blood tax by providing the *Rheinbund* princes with a grim reminder of the emperor's power. Yet, the capture of this city would not have evoked the same gestures of fealty that would have inundated Bonaparte's headquarters in the wake of another Austerlitz. Instead, the allocation of troops for operations against Berlin actually damaged imperial relations with the *Rheinbund*. With few exceptions, Napoleon's exploitation of the troops of his own allies provided a constant point of contention in imperial diplomacy. The Army of Berlin contained more foreign units than French divisions.[89] Saxon, Bavarian, Hessian, Westphalian, Württemberger, Polish, and Italian regiments made this army a multinational force; the implications of its defeat shook Central Europe, particularly the *Rheinbund*. Dissatisfaction with the French mounted, and the defeat at Dennewitz fueled anti-French sentiment. Consequently, another casualty that must be attributed to the "master plan" was the alliance Napoleon had forged with the German princes. News of Dennewitz induced the Tyrol to support Austria's efforts against the French. Moreover, after Dennewitz, Bavaria made overtures to the Allies, and eventually joined the Sixth Coalition as Austria's ally.

The battle of Dennewitz marked not only the ultimate failure of the "master plan," but it also provided a crucial turning point in the War of the Sixth Coalition. In its aftermath, both sides changed strategy. Blücher brought his Army of Silesia and the Army of North Germany over the Elbe and into the Saxon theater; his decisions in early October and the efficient work of the Prussian General Staff throughout the

88. In 1813, the British sent over £1,000,000 in military stores to the Baltic for use by the Prussians and Russians; in all £11,294,416 of the 1813 military budget went to Great Britain's Allies as advances, while an additional £11,335,412 were distributed as direct loans. Philip J. Haythornthwaite, *The Napoleonic Sourcebook* (New York: Facts on File, 1990), 195.

89. Once again, this may be viewed as proof of Napoleon's contempt for the fighting quality of the Allied troops attached to the Army of North Germany. To spare his own French divisions, he allocated two Saxon divisions and one each of Bavarian, Württemberger, and Italian origins. Oudinot's 12th Corps had two French divisions to one Bavarian, while the 7th Corps had two Saxon to one French; the 4th Corps contained one division each of French, Italian, and Württemberger troops.

campaign made the battle of Leipzig possible. For his part, Napoleon made one final attempt to catch Blücher's army south of the Elbe. By 9 October, Bonaparte had 140,000 men poised to destroy the Allied forces south of Wittenberg. Both Blücher and Bernadotte escaped by retreating across the Saale River, thus exposing Berlin and all of North Germany. Only a corps of mostly Prussian militia stood between Napoleon and Berlin, and the long-awaited execution of the "master plan." Yet the time to exploit any of the dubious advantages it offered had passed. Moving north over the Elbe certainly would have saved the garrisons in Torgau, Wittenberg, Magdeburg, Küstrin, and Stettin, as well as Davout's corps in Hamburg. Murat's four corps probably would have been able to escape eastward from Leipzig to Torgau. In a virtual *coup de théâtre,* Napoleon could have exchanged places with the Allies, stranding the Bohemian, Silesian, and North German armies in the depleted Saxon countryside, and holding the right bank of the Elbe against them from Hamburg to Dresden. The time for running, however, had passed; no maneuver, flank march, or surprise attack could truly alter the course of the war unless it led to the destruction of one or more of the Allied armies. At this late stage of the campaign, Napoleon finally realized that it mattered little if he reached the Vistula; he still had to destroy the enemy's ability to wage war. Mounting war weariness in France meant that a decision had to be reached soon. Instead of wasting his scant resources by evacuating the theater, he decided to draw the Allies to Leipzig for an epic struggle: the Battle of the Nations. Knowing that Schwarzenberg was slowly advancing on this city, the emperor accepted the fact that he would soon be surrounded by enemy armies. After months of chasing an elusive enemy that had smashed his own lieutenants, Napoleon welcomed the prospect of a showdown.[90]

Epilogue: Vengeance or Brilliance?

Throughout 1813, Napoleon based his operations in Germany on a strategy of maneuver rather than annihilation. Whether the goal was Danzig, Stettin, or Berlin, the principal French objective in Germany was never the destruction of the main enemy army. This striking deviation from Napoleon's principles of war meant that had Ney or Oudinot effected a *coup de théâtre* and gained the Vistula, the French would still

90. Battle raged around the Saxon city of Leipzig from 15–19 October 1813. At its height, Napoleon's forces numbered 195,000 men with seven hundred guns, opposed to 365,000 Allied soldiers with fifteen hundred guns. Heavily outnumbered and pressed on all points, Napoleon ordered the *Grand Armée* to commence its retreat through the city and on to the Rhine River, leaving behind 73,000 killed, wounded, and captured. The Allies lost an estimated 54,000 men. Defeat at Leipzig cost Napoleon control of Germany and brought the Allies to France's natural frontiers.

have had to defeat the enemy army. Such a victory had to be over the main Allied army so that one of the belligerents would be forced out of the war, similar to the consequences of Austerlitz in 1805 and Wagram in 1809. Carl von Clausewitz teaches that "the grand objective of all military action" should be the destruction of the enemy's armed forces.[91] Many times in Napoleon's career, the fate of the enemy's capital meant little to the outcome of the war when compared to the fate of the enemy's army. In 1805, Napoleon had conquered two-thirds of Austria and gained Vienna, but it was the decisive victory at Austerlitz that had brought Francis to terms. By November of the following year, the *Grande Armée* controlled Berlin and one-half of Prussia, yet met resistance in Silesia and East Prussia where the remnant of Frederick William's army held on until the Russians arrived. That conflict did not end until Napoleon broke the Tsar's military might at Friedland in 1807. Conversely, the capture of Moscow in 1812 did not force Alexander to the peace table since the Russian army, although badly mauled, had marched away from Borodino.[92] In 1813, Berlin certainly did not serve as the central hub of Allied power, although in the opening months of the war, possession of the city did influence Russo-Prussian planning until the defeat at Lützen and subsequent retreat across Saxony. Ultimately, Berlin never served as a decisive strategic point, which, according to Antoine Henri de Jomini's definition, exercised "a marked influence either upon the result of the campaign or upon a single enterprise."[93]

That the fall of Berlin in 1806 and the destruction of the Prussian army did not compel Frederick William to seek terms certainly challenges the increasing importance that Napoleon attached to the city's capture in 1813. In the campaigns of 1806 and 1807, Berlin did not serve as Prussia's center of gravity, which Clausewitz defines as "the hub of all power and movement on which everything depends." Furthermore, Frederick William willingly subordinated himself and his state to the Russians in 1813, thus making the army of his protector the coalition's

91. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 577.

92. Ibid., 595.

93. Antoine Henri de Jomini, *The Art of War* (Philadelphia, 1862; reprint ed., London: Greenhill Books, 1992), 85–88. Jomini notes that "in strategy, the object of the campaign determines the objective point. If this aim be offensive, the point will be the possession of the hostile capital, or that of a province whose loss would compel the enemy to make peace. In a war of invasion the capital is, ordinarily, the objective point. However, the geographic position of the capital, the political relations of the belligerents with their neighbors, and their respective resources are considerations. . . [that are] intimately connected with plans of operations, and may decide whether an army should attempt or not to occupy the hostile enemy capital."

center of gravity.[94] Should the Russian army suffer a decisive defeat, the war would be lost, just as in 1807. After the Austrians joined the conflict, both Frederick William and Alexander had to accept the lead of Austria's eminent statesman, the new *de facto* prime minister of the coalition, Clemens von Metternich. Thus, in the case of this autumn campaign, the coalition's center of gravity shifted to the Army of Bohemia, which not only was the largest of the three armies fielded by the Allies in August, but also represented the principal Austrian commitment, since no Austrian corps served in the other two Allied armies.

Perhaps more important than Austrian military preponderance was the "community of interest" that solidified the Sixth Coalition in 1813. Serving as the coalition's center of gravity more so than any single army, this community of interest was formed by the Allied desire to liberate Central Europe from French control. An argument can be made in support of Napoleon's early attempts to employ the "master plan" to disrupt this community of interest by dividing the Allies. Political unity certainly had not been a characteristic of previous coalitions. In 1813, however, Bonaparte confronted a coalition marked by an unprecedented degree of unity.[95] Beginning with the Treaty of Kalisch in February and extending to the Teplitz Accords in September, Allied unity steadily increased.[96]

94. By signing the Treaty of Kalisch, Prussia became Russia's junior partner. This was logical in view of Frederick William's vulnerable position, financial weakness, and poor foreign policy record. In return for Russia's pledge to restore his state, the great-nephew of Frederick II accepted a subordinate role. "To be safe in the arms of the strong power," explains historian Enno Kraehe, "the weak one must be absolutely unswerving and devoted in its loyalty." More importantly, the treaty did not enslave the Prussians as Napoleon had the previous year, nor did it diminish the state to a Russian satellite. Tsar Alexander pledged to fight for Prussia's restoration in terms of territory and population. Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon,* 247–48; Enno Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), 1:157.

95. Nevertheless, beyond the goal of liberating Central Europe, the counsels of Napoleon's adversaries remained divided during 1813 and well into 1814.

96. Austria, Russia, and Prussia agreed to the Teplitz Accords on 7 September 1813. The general terms called for the material restoration of Austria and Prussia to their pre-1805 status, the restoration of the states of northwestern Europe to their 1803 status, the abolition of the *Rheinbund* and the independence of the German states between the Rhine and the western frontiers of Austria and Prussia, and the partition of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw along lines that would be negotiated at a later date. The three eastern powers vowed not to make a separate peace with Napoleon, and each agreed to keep an army of 150,000 men in the field until the end of the war. The goal of the alliance, however, was not the ultimate destruction of France. Austria needed a powerful (and preferably) Napoleonic France to limit Russian expansion. Schroeder, *European Politics,* 478; Thomas Nipperdey, *Germany From Napoleon to Bismarck, 1799–1866,* trans. Daniel Nolan (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 71; Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy,* 1:203; Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), 97–98.

Very early in the campaign, during the Lützen-Bautzen cycle, the Prussians demonstrated that they would not pursue national interests that could jeopardize the coalition's community of interest. Since the Prussians did indeed subordinate their own needs to the greater community of interest, Napoleon should have viewed his adversaries as a single entity and thus concentrated his principal efforts into one decisive blow, which would have been the most effective means to achieve victory.

Another consideration must be given to the nature of Prussia's war effort. Was the struggle a popular uprising, in which case Napoleon could have considered Prussian public opinion when determining his adversary's center of gravity? In fact, as late as 8 September, the French Foreign Minister, Hughes-Bernard Maret, informed his colleague, Minister of War Henri Clarke, that

> the Russian army is not our [most] dangerous enemy. It has suffered greatly and can not yet replace its losses. Apart from its numerous cavalry, it will play a subordinate role. Prussia, however, has made great efforts; an intense enthusiasm has supported the decision of the monarch to go to war. Prussia's armies are numerous, its generals, its officers, and its soldiers are animated by the best spirit.[97]

Thus, in Napoleon's view, the fall of the Prussian capital certainly would have been detrimental to public opinion. A local determination to protect the capital, which featured a joint civil-military homeland defense network, the damming of rivers to flood the surrounding countryside, and the volunteer enlistment of the educated youth, suggests popular acceptance of the war against the French Empire.[98] However, despite the populist beginnings of the conflict, Frederick William transformed the people's war into an eighteenth-century *Kabinettskrieg* early in the struggle. The long road that eventually led to the triumph of conservatism in Prussia began on 19 March, when the Russians and the Prussians signed the Treaty of Breslau—the diplomatic supplement to the military alliance forged at Kalisch. For Prussia, the Kalisch and Breslau agreements—conventional state treaties—meant that the struggle ultimately would be a cabinet war rather than a people's war.[99] Thus, the Prussian state would continue to fight with or without the people, just as it did in 1806–7, when French invasion and occupation hardly moved an apathetic populace.

Napoleon knew little of this for sure, and hindsight always benefits the critic. In the final analysis, the operations against Berlin and the

97. Cited in Freytag-Loringhoven, *Kriegslehren nach Clausewitz,* 14.

98. On 17 March, Frederick William issued his *An mein Volk* proclamation that summoned the Prussian people to fight for their freedom and make sacrifices for their King, Fatherland, and honor.

99. Kraehe, *Metternich's German Policy,* 1:156–60; Schroeder, *European Politics,* 453–56.

ensuing battles that resulted from Napoleon's almost obsessive wish to implement his "master plan" should not be judged by the losses incurred by the French armies involved, but rather by how they limited the emperor's own ability to achieve decisive victory. Napoleon never directed his principal effort against Berlin, yet the city's fall, as well as the resources he allocated to that objective, proved to be central considerations in his planning. The logical extension of this assertion is the question: had Napoleon's skills deteriorated? In tactics, he suffered no rival, for the opposing commanders in Central Europe could not match him on the field of battle. In operations and strategy, however, the Allies finally produced a system which combined with numerical superiority to exhaust both the emperor and his army. The Trachenberg Plan kept Bonaparte off balance and robbed him of one of his greatest maxims—initiative. Although the Allies deserve praise for their successful operational art of war more than Napoleon deserves blame for his inability to counter it, defeat in 1813, particularly in North Germany, can be attributed to the marshals whom Napoleon selected to lead the operations. While Davout, perhaps the greatest of Napoleon's lieutenants, languished in Hamburg, Ney, Oudinot, and Macdonald, men who at best were qualified to command a corps, led French armies in critical campaigns.[100] Although successive blunders exposed the incompetence of Ney and Oudinot in the spring campaign, Napoleon selected the same commanders for the Berlin operations during the autumn campaign. His failure to appoint an officer capable of commanding the Army of Berlin symbolizes the lapse in judgment that plagued the emperor's last campaigns.[101] Ney, particularly after the defection of his chief of staff, Jomini, could not coordinate independent operations. The fact that Oudinot, Ney, Macdonald, and, to a lesser extent, Davout failed to meet their master's expectations in 1813 underscores Bonaparte's failure to grasp the importance of an adequate general staff system. Lastly, Napoleon's ambiguous instructions did not help his lieutenants. French commanders in 1813 were impeded by Napoleon's fatal tendency to underestimate the numbers of his adversaries and overestimate his own.

One final question concerns the role of revenge. Was vengeance for Prussia's betrayal in the early months of 1813 central to Napoleon's plan-

100. Napoleon to Eugène, 15 March 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 19721, 25:88–89. Davout's original purpose was to occupy and hold Hamburg in order to protect the left wing of the *Grande Armée.* After Napoleon reestablished himself in Saxony in May, Davout remained at Hamburg with troops of limited quality to prevent any Allied operations against Westphalia, Holland, and Belgium.

101. Napoleon was well aware of the shortcomings of his chief lieutenants. On 22 August, he wrote that his greatest obstacle was the lack of confidence his generals had in themselves: "[W]herever I am not present in person, the enemy's forces appear considerable to them." Napoleon to Maret, 22 August 1813, ibid., No. 20437, 26:112–13.

ning? Did Napoleon's contempt for the adopted Crown Prince of Sweden and commander of the Army of North Germany, Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, a Frenchman by birth who had achieved international fame as one of Napoleon's own marshals and kinsman through marriage, influence the emperor's strategy? Jomini maintains that "in most campaigns some military enterprises are undertaken to carry out a political end, sometimes quite important, but often very irrational. They frequently lead to the commission of great errors in strategy."[102] Although Napoleon based his strategy on the "master plan," such personal vendettas doubtlessly made the Berlin operation more appealing. When Prussia had finally declared war on France in March, Napoleon's personal secretary, Baron Fain, claims that

> the emperor felt relieved after receiving this belated declaration; he satisfied himself with the response that he preferred a declared enemy rather than a treacherous ally. In private, however, he accepted the defection as just punishment for the mistake he had made at Tilsit, in allowing the House of Hohenzollern to remain on the throne, and then to bring them into his alliance. "This is not the first time," stated Napoleon, "that kindness has been a bad advisor in politics."[103]

Fain adds that, consequently, "Napoleon never lost sight of Berlin."[104] Other eyewitnesses claim that a vindictive Napoleon was determined to open the campaign by taking the capital of his former ally. Marshal Auguste Marmont noted that "passion prompted him to act quickly against Prussia. He desired the first cannon shots to be fired against Berlin, and that a startling and terrible vengeance should immediately follow the renewal of hostilities." Another contemporary, General Jean-Jacques Pelet, states that after Lützen, "Frederick William had reason to fear the revenge of a justly angered victor." As for historians, Chandler maintains that Napoleon had a "vindictive desire to see a disloyal monarch and a treacherous ex-marshal heavily punished . . . the irrational tendencies of a vendetta against Prussia and Bernadotte were undoubtedly present in the plan: Napoleon wanted revenge on his former ally and colleague for their treachery." Colonel F. N. Maude claims that the planning behind Oudinot's operation against Berlin in August was so uncharacteristic of Napoleon that it must represent his complete contempt for Bernadotte's military ability. Maude views Napoleon's selection of the Berlin project over an operation against Prague as a plan "heightened by the satisfaction to be derived from administering prompt chastisement to Bernadotte." Owen Connelly notes that Napoleon responded

102. Jomini, *The Art of War,* 91.
103. Fain, *Manuscrit de 1813,* 1:103.
104. Ibid., 1:417.

"to an obsession with taking Berlin—to punish the Prussians."[105] With the exception of one brief yet contemptuous statement that predicted his former marshal's conduct in the upcoming campaign ("he will make a show"), Napoleon's own letters offer little insight into his personal feelings.[106] Other than a forceful directive for Oudinot to use his heavy artillery to bomb Berlin into submission, the emperor refrains from using especially vituperative language when referring to the Prussians.[107]

Whether vengeance was a secondary or even a tertiary motive in Napoleon's strategy will never be known for certain. Yet, the history of Napoleon's relations with Prussia suggests that he harbored not only animosity, but also perhaps a deep-rooted jealousy of Prussia's military heritage and possibly even the fame of Frederick the Great. Numerous commentaries can confirm Chandler's observation that Frederick the Great was one of the few commanders for whom Napoleon "always professed the deepest respect."[108] However, Napoleon's conduct toward Prussia was marked by a heavy-handed vindictiveness that was absent in his relations with the other powers; only the 1809 Treaty of Pressburg, which ended the fourth of Napoleon's wars with Austria, can be compared to the Franco-Prussian Treaty of Tilsit. Although Napoleon never dethroned the Hohenzollerns as he did the Bourbons of Spain and Naples—an interesting point in itself—the Prussians seemingly always bore the brunt of his wrath. Napoleon never forgave Frederick William for his betrayal in 1805. Punishment came in the Schönbrunn and Paris Treaties, which reduced Prussia to a French satellite and impressed Frederick William into Napoleon's war against Great Britain. In 1806, as Frederick William fled eastward after the disaster at Jena-Auerstädt, Napoleon paid homage to Frederick the Great by visiting the royal tomb at the *Garnisonkirch* in Potsdam. There, he could not help himself from confiscating Frederick's sword, decorations, general's sash, and the colors of his Royal Guard—all of which were forwarded to the Invalides in Paris. As F. L. Petre concludes, Napoleon could have "forgone the petty satisfaction of removing from Prussia the poor relics of her former glory," but he "could never cast aside his desire for trivial triumphs."[109] Meanwhile, in Berlin itself, the French stripped the Prussian capital of its

105. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon,* 902–3; Owen Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1987), 186; Marmont, *Mémoires,* 5:140; Maude, *The Leipzig Campaign,* 163–64, 204; Pelet, "Des principales opérations de la campagne de 1813," 54.

106. "Il ne fait que piaffer," cited in Maude, *The Leipzig Campaign,* 164.

107. Berthier to Oudinot, 13 August 1813, C^{17} 179, AAT; Napoleon to Oudinot, 12 August 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 20365, 26:39.

108. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon,* 499.

109. Petre, *Napoleon's Conquest of Prussia, 1806* (London, 1907; reprint ed., London: Greenhill Books, 1993), 229.

wealth and few treasures, including the Quadriga, which had only recently been placed atop the Brandenburg Gate; the goddess of victory was shipped to Paris and did not return until 1814. At Tilsit, Napoleon purposefully continued to humiliate the Prussians at any opportunity. Frederick William was not invited to the first day of negotiations when the epic meeting between Napoleon and Alexander took place on the great raft moored in the Niemen. Prussia's envoys could not sign the treaty until two days after the Russians had concluded their negotiations with Napoleon—a symbolic act for all of Europe to see. Napoleon held the king in contempt, courted the queen while she begged for concessions, and treated both royals as beneath him. In the negotiations, Bonaparte made it extremely clear that any concession was granted as a favor to the Tsar. Chandler claims that Napoleon, who "was determined to have his pound of flesh, immediately published to the world the extent of Prussia's dismemberment and humiliation. . . . Prussia was virtually dismembered for the greater aggrandizement of France, or rather for the satisfaction of the ambitions of the Bonaparte family."[110]

Another factor that influenced Napoleon's planning in 1813 was his disdain for the troops that guarded Berlin. His lack of respect for Bernadotte's Army of North Germany—which he referred to as a rabble—made the revival of the "master plan" so attractive.[111] Despite the admirable performance of the Prussian troops during the spring campaign, Bonaparte's contempt for them and their allies remained unmitigated. In mid-August, when the emperor asked Laurent Gouvion de Saint-Cyr to comment on the plans for the offensive against Berlin, the marshal claims to have cautioned Napoleon not to underestimate either the numbers or the quality of the Army of North Germany.[112] Napoleon critically undervalued the large contingents of hastily trained *Landwehr* regiments that in part comprised the two Prussian corps attached to the Army of North Germany. His scorn emerges in his 2 September refer-

110. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon,* 587–89.

111. Yorck von Wartenburg, *Napoleon as a General,* 2:281. In describing Napoleon's operation against Berlin in August, Colonel Maude states: "Meanwhile, separate columns, aggregating nearly 120,000 men, should converge on Berlin from Hamburg, Magdeburg, Wittenberg, and Bautzen. This latter feature of his plan was so entirely at variance with all his own previous practice, that we can only suppose he adopted it out of complete contempt for the Prussian *Landwehr* in front of him." Colonel Freytag-Loringhoven notes that "Napoleon underestimated the Prussian *Landwehr,* but correctly judged that he did not have to fear bold operations from the commander of the Army of North Germany." Freytag-Loringhoven, *Kriegslehren nach Clausewitz,* 21; Maude, *The Leipzig Campaign,* 163.

112. Laurent Gouvion de Saint-Cyr, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire militaire sous le directoire, le consulat et l'empire* (Paris: Anselin, 1834), 4:59.

ence to the Army of North Germany as "all this cloud of Cossacks and pack of bad *Landwehr*."[113]

What remains clear is that the emperor longed to lead an army against Berlin. In order for the "master plan" to achieve total success, Napoleon would have had to adhere strictly to its premises as established in early March. This would have required him to reconfigure his lines of communication, sacrifice Dresden, and shift his base of operations to Hanover, Brandenburg, or Pomerania. According to his "Note" of 30 August 1813, however, the emperor refused to abandon his central position in Saxony, particularly Dresden's fortified camp and vital supplies. Although one can only speculate whether or not the "master plan" would have succeeded under Napoleon's personal supervision, one can draw some obvious conclusions, based on the principles of the Trachenberg Plan. Bernadotte would have ordered his army to retreat once he confirmed that Napoleon himself commanded the approaching French army. Since the Russians placed no great value on Berlin in view of Moscow's fate the previous year, they would have obeyed without question. By their own admission, Bülow and the other Prussian corps commander, General Bogislaw Friedrich von Tauentzien, would have reluctantly followed. Similar to Blücher's Silesian Army in the initial days of the autumn campaign, Bernadotte's demoralized Army of North Germany would have retreated. Napoleon, however, would not have pursued Bernadotte for long before the other two Allied armies converged on their respective French holding forces. Thus, he would have been forced to race south to secure his lieutenants and to confront the main strength of the enemy coalition. Once Bernadotte's camp knew this, the Prussians would have dragged the Army of North Germany back to Berlin, albeit possibly to confront Marshal Davout—whom Bernadotte feared almost as much as the emperor himself. Be that as it may, with the French in possession of Berlin, Bonaparte still would have had to confront and defeat the enemy armies that were converging on Leipzig in accordance with the Trachenberg Plan. Thus, in regards to the "master plan," as Napoleon himself once commented concerning another strategic plan: "so much for the offensive."

113. Berthier to Ney, 2 September 1813, C^{17} 180, AAT; Napoleon to Berthier, 2 September 1813, *Correspondance,* No. 20502, 26:162–63.