Glory Overshadowed: The Military Career of General Jean Boudet 1769-1809

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GLORY OVERSHADOWED: THE MILITARY CAREER OF GENERAL JEAN BOUDET 1769-1809

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the military career of general of division Jean Boudet. Born in Bordeaux, France in February 1769, and he joined the French army in 1785. Boudet was released three years later. He volunteered for the army in 1792 and was sent to the Pyrenees to fight the Spanish. Just two years later, he was sent to the Caribbean to retake the French Antilles from the English. Boudet recaptured Guadeloupe from England in 1794 and by 1796 he had been promoted to general of division.

Boudet returned to France in 1798 and was sent to Holland under Brune to fight a combined Russo-English force. Boudet found success at the battle of Castricum on 6 October 1799. He commanded a division in the Army of Reserve in 1800 and played a vital role in the French victory at Marengo on 14 June 1800.

In early 1802, Boudet returned to the Caribbean as a part of the Leclerc expedition. He fought on both Saint-Domingue and returned briefly to Guadeloupe. By the end of 1802, he sailed back to France and avoided yellow fever that destroyed the majority of the expedition. Boudet was appointed to serve under Marmont in the invasion force against England. After its cancellation, Boudet was sent to Italy to create a new division that he would command. This division did not see action until 1807 in the siege of Colberg and the raising of Stralsund in July 1807. Early 1809, Boudet was sent to command a division in the observation corps of the Army of Germany. He defended Essling at the battle of Aspern-Essling on 21-22 May 1809. About six weeks later, he fought in his final battle at Wagram on 5-6 July 1809 where he lost his artillery to the numerical superiority of the Austrians on the second day. Boudet died on 14 September 1809 from gout.

Boudet’s military achievements have remained largely ignored. Most of the credit went to his superiors. This thesis strives not only to provide an accurate description of his life and battles, but to offer a new perspective into Boudet’s talents as a general and the actions and roles that distinguished him.
INTRODUCTION

Written history judges and rewards those who received credit or scorn for their actions in life. In war, heroes and martyrs are molded from the interpretation of the events on the battlefield. Accounts from the time are the only windows historians have to determine the true course of past events. These accounts, and subsequently those dictated by others, form the legacy of all historical figures. During the Napoleonic Era, accomplishments of even a single man, soon became lore. However, modern accounts of history have often ignored the praise rightly due to those who were not granted recognition even from their own battlefield comrades.

General of Division Jean Boudet fought valiantly and loyally during the French Revolution and then under Napoleon until Boudet’s untimely death in 1809. He found great success in the colonial islands of the Caribbean, played a vital role in the French victory at Marengo in June 1800, and fought bravely alongside his men, with his division isolated twice in the campaign in the Habsburg Lands in 1809. The accomplishments in his military career were always overshadowed by the praise delineated to others, who were not undeserving of praise, but whose role was actually not as vital as it would have seemed.

Boudet has rarely been remembered in the primary accounts of his contemporaries. Historiography has largely neglected Boudet’s presence and accomplishments. His bravery and courage for his country and for the men he served under and commanded were part of a leadership and determination that rivaled any other man in the French Army during his time. He was never arrogant and never claimed accolades for himself, even in his own documents; instead, he credited his men for his success. He remains one of the most underappreciated generals throughout the Napoleonic Era and never ascended to the rank of marshal nor even to command a corp. Under the Napoleonic command system, it was not necessary to be a marshal before obtaining a corps command. However, Boudet deserved more credit and command than he received in history or on the battlefield.

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1 Boudet’s division was left alone to fight vastly superior forces on two occasions. The first was at the battle of Aspern-Essling and the second at Wagram a few weeks later. For more information on these two battles, see chapters four and five respectively.
Historical works have neglected Boudet throughout all his campaigns including the ones that he was more intricately involved in such as his expeditions to Guadeloupe and Saint-Domingue. One reason for the lack of historical interest could be the general dearth of interest in the military operations where he served. His first campaign, as a captain, in the Pyrenees has attained little interest among scholars. His first and most lengthy expedition to the Caribbean has received some attention as a whole; however, little is written in English. Through all the available sources, only Barreau’s work *Les Guerres de Guadeloupe au 17e siècle* mentions Boudet at any real length in the operations.²

The campaign in Holland in 1799 does not leave much primary or secondary literature. Guillaume Marie Anne Brune, the commander in chief for the campaign, is often mentioned. Edouard Gachot’s work on the campaign of 1799, titled *Les Campagnes de 1799: Jourdan en Allemagne et Brune en Hollande* focuses primarily on Jourdan’s campaign in Germany. In the limited text devoted to Holland, Gachot does mention Boudet’s division.³ Unfortunately, not much attention was given to Boudet himself.

The Army of Reserve and the campaign of 1800 should certainly have accorded Boudet due praise and historiographical attention. This is especially true with the Battle of Marengo on 14 June 1800. Most secondary sources, when referring to Boudet’s division, identify Desaix rather than Boudet. In contrast, one must note George Armand Furse’s *Marengo and Hohenlinden* for its treatment of the battle and the credit that it offers Boudet for his part in the victory.⁴

Of all of Boudet’s campaigns, the Leclerc expedition in 1801-02 has provided the most opportunity for primary and secondary literature pertaining to Boudet. Pamphile de Lacroix’s *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de la révolution de Saint-Domingue*, Leclerc’s letters, and Thomas Madiou’s *Histoire d’Haiti* all discuss Boudet’s service thoroughly.⁵

Finally, the campaign of 1809 offered many sources including Masséna’s *Mémoires*, Pelet’s *Mémoires sur la guerre de 1809*, and some secondary literature.

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However, many of these volumes mention Boudet but do not fully cover the issues at hand. For example, Boudet was defending Essling in the battle of Aspern-Essling but his operations there are difficult to document. Most mention goes to his superior officer during the battle, Marshal Jean Lannes.⁶

The lack of attention given to Boudet created a difficult task in creating this thesis. The only work Boudet actually wrote was the journal he kept during the 1800 campaign. Coupled with secondary material, memoirs from generals who took part in the various campaigns were vital in being able to put together an accurate description of the battles and campaigns of Boudet.

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CHAPTER ONE: RISE OF A GENERAL 1769-1799

Jean Boudet was born to Anne Borie and Jacques Boudet in Bordeaux, France in the department of Gironde on 19 February, 1769. His father ran a perfume business and made certain that Jean received a proper education. Jean excelled in school and decided to pursue a military career.¹

On 20 April, 1785, at the age of sixteen, Boudet began his military career as a second lieutenant in the Holland Legion of Maillebois. After transferring to the Penthièvre dragoons, he was released from service on 10 April, 1788.² His three years of initial service in the army of Louis XVI passed quietly.

When the Revolution erupted in 1789, Boudet took no active part in the initial activities of the revolutionaries. However, when the National Assembly called upon volunteers for the army to defend France in 1792, Boudet eagerly enlisted. He joined the 7th battalion of Volunteers from the Gironde and was named lieutenant on 5 August. Boudet did not retain the rank of lieutenant for long. With the new volunteer system in the army, quick promotion was commonplace, and the French Revolution brought promotion by merit rather than class. Many nobles had held positions as officers but they emigrated to other countries, leaving their rank vacant for anyone who could prove their ability, regardless of social station. Boudet was one of the many, like another soldier named Bonaparte, who benefited from this system. After a couple months of service, Boudet was elected by his own comrades as captain of a company of chasseurs under the command of Bon-Adrien-Jannot Moncey. These troops were bound for service in the Pyrénées Occidentales where Boudet would command his fellow men in his first battle.³

By early June 1793, the French Army was camped around Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port in the Pyrenees. At the break of day on 6 June 1793, a thick fog blanketed the area.

² Ibid., 4.
³ Ibid.
The Spanish used it to their advantage and attacked the French in hopes of surprising Moncey’s troops at Chateau-Pignon. Boudet and his men formed the advance guard for this French camp and were ordered to support the soldiers who bore the thrust of the Spanish offensive. Boudet was tested almost immediately from the fire of six Spanish artillery pieces arranged in a battery. After assessing the damage inflicted on his men, he took charge of the situation. At the head of about 120 soldiers, he zealously led an attack on the Spanish artillery positions. In this first combat, Boudet and his men silenced the Spanish guns, capturing four of them. This brave and unselfish attack on the part of all involved did not come without losses. Only twenty of Boudet’s men who took part in the assault returned unscathed, but Boudet received a wound in his left shoulder. As a result of Boudet’s audacious assault, the Spanish cancelled their attack.4

Boudet’s success at Chateau-Pignon attracted the attention of his superiors. The end of 1793, brought a reorganization of the entire French Army. On 13 December 1793, he received command of the 1st battalion, which was part of the force called upon to help in the siege at Toulon. However, before they could reach the town, Bonaparte had lifted the siege on 19 December.5

Soon after the fall of Toulon, Boudet was assigned to an expedition preparing to sail to the Caribbean to regain its former French Antilles.6 The islands had been occupied by the English following an expedition led by English Admiral John Jervis. The invasion fleet arrived near Barbade in early 1794, and by the end of April, the English had captured most of the French islands.7

The French National Convention reacted immediately, recognizing the economic importance of the Caribbean. Under the orders of naval Captain Coretin-Urbain de Leissegues, the expedition was organized at Rochefort. A battalion of sans-culottes, approximately 1,200-1,300 men, were placed under the command of Boudet. Other forces included a company of line troops and two artillery batteries under the command of Mathieu Pélardy. General of Division Claude Aubert and General of Brigade Jean-Baptiste-Jacques Cartier were also a part of the expedition. Two civil commissioners.

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 4-5.
6 Boudet would return to the colonies in 1801. See chapter three for more information.
Pierre Chrétin and Victor Hugues, were sent. Hugues informed Boudet of the dangerous situation ahead and of the special importance of taking the port of Point-à-Pitre because of its strategic importance.

Boudet and his detachment sailed to the island of Ré where on 4 April 1794, they arrived near Guadeloupe, which had a population around 107,000 people. The majority, about 90,000, were slaves. Despite the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen by the National Assembly in 1789, the slaves still did not have any rights. The new laws on the continent did not apply to the colonies.

In early June, Boudet landed his forces at Salines to attack Point-à-Pitre at dawn. The defenses of the town included five armed forts. The French successfully attacked Fort Fleur-d’Epée, part of the defensive system with Fort Union. They defeated 900 men, armed with sixteen pieces of artillery, and captured the town. The French were not without losses. The French incurred ninety casualties in taking this strategic location.

For his efforts, Boudet received a promotion to chief of brigade on 19 June 1794 and increased his command to the size of three battalions.

The English were not easily deterred. On 10 June, they landed an additional 2,000 troops at Gosier with a detachment towards Petit-Bourg. They resolved to launch a counterattack to retake their former losses. Boudet, positioned on the heights around Fleur-d’Epée with two hundred men and assistance from French artillery, repulsed the English attack. Boudet’s personal leadership and courage in this action gained the notice of Hugues. Exactly a month after he was named chief of brigade, Hugues promoted him again to general of brigade. He was only twenty-five years old.

The English launched yet another attack against the French forces protecting Fleur-d’Epée. This time the English employed part of their fleet to protect their troops

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8 Ibid., 111-12.
10 Domy, “Un Bordelais Méconnu,” 5; Barreau, Guerres en Guadeloupe, 95-96.
11 Barreau, Guerres en Guadeloupe, 113.
13 Barreau, Guerres en Guadeloupe, 114.
and to bombard Port-à-Pitre.\textsuperscript{15} The French plan included three points of attack. From the front was chief of battalion Bures at the river Salée, Boudet at the Grand Cul-de-Sac to drive towards Baie-Mahault, and finally General Pelardy landed at Goyave from the south. The crossing of the cul-de-sac was dangerous because of weather or the English ships in the area. At night, the landings were endangered if the boats ran aground.\textsuperscript{16} Boudet quickly occupied and consolidated his positions. On 27 September, he then sailed with a detachment to land behind English positions and attack them.\textsuperscript{17} Boudet had fifteen canoes and eleven boats that were unloaded at the Bay of Cercelle unharassed.\textsuperscript{18} The forces of Boudet and Bures linked up as one column and attacked the English camp at Berville. The following day the French bombarded the camp. On 29 September, the united columns of Boudet and Bures attacked Berville from the northwest side but met stiff resistance. The French surprised the entrenched English. Boudet succeeded in capturing the ground. His victory provided a strategic success for all the French forces involved in this expedition by taking an important part of Guadeloupe. The English evacuated the entire north side of the island, and took new positions in the Basse-Terre area of Guadeloupe.\textsuperscript{19}

The English still held the important Fort Saint-Charles and depended on it to resist the pressure from the French. Boudet, wounded in his right shoulder at the defense of Point-à-Pitre, had not completely healed. He was determined to participate in operations around Fort Saint-Charles on 12 December 1794. The best weapon Boudet’s soldiers had was their undying courage to fight rather than their mastery of arms, so their assault was a dangerous endeavor. The English, again entrenched, had solid artillery support from twelve warships from Jervis’ command. Despite the odds, Boudet ordered the assault. The French attacked several times, taking accurate fire from the English warships, but still broke through the English lines. As a result of Boudet’s victory, the English evacuated the entire island of Guadeloupe in a campaign that lasted only 160

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{16} Barreau, \textit{Guerres en Guadeloupe}, 121.
\textsuperscript{17} Domy, “Un Bordelais Méconnu,” 5.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.; Barreau, \textit{Guerres en Guadeloupe}, 122.
\textsuperscript{19} Domy. “Un Bordelais Méconnu,” 5-6.
days. With the French capture of Guadeloupe, they reestablished a base of operations for their naval war against the English colonies in the Caribbean.\textsuperscript{20}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map.png}
\caption{The Attack on Berville and General Map of Guadeloupe in 1794 From Barreau, \textit{Guerres in Guadeloupe}, 120.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 6.
Boudet distinguished himself several times over the course of the campaign in the islands. The attacks at Saint-Vincent, Grenade, Anguille and more specifically against Saint-Lucie succeeded largely to his contributions and the courage of his men. For his service rendered in the colonies, he received his tricolor belt, the defining mark of his new rank, general of division on 30 September 1796 at age twenty-seven.\\footnote{Ibid.}

While he was in the colonies, he also had the opportunity to demonstrate his contributions off the battlefield. Boudet was charged with the task of creating defenses for the island. In addition, he also worked to restore peace to the colony and encourage economic development. To accomplish this, he led a detachment of dragoons to put down a rebellion near Lamentin. Besides his military adventures, he met his wife, Mlle Marie Joseph Elisabeth Augustine Darboussier there. She was a girl of just eighteen, living at Port-à-Pitre and from a good family with origins from Toulouse. They were married on 28 December 1794.\\footnote{Domy, “Un Bordelais Méconnu,” 6-7 ; Chevrier, Acte du Mariage, Dossier Boudet 7yd349 [Date Unknown] The marriage produced two children. The first was a daughter, named Aimée, in 1800, and the second was a son, named Louis-Auguste, two years later. Domy, “Un Bordelais Méconnu,” 7.}

After serving on the island for four years, Boudet returned to France in 1798 on leave. While there, he bought a beautiful property in Dordogne, the estate of Saint-Martin. However, his time away from the battlefield was short. He was soon sent to Holland to serve under General Guillaume Marie Anne Brune against a combined Russian-English invasion force. In August 1799, Dutch troops opened the port of Texel to the English. By 10 September, Brune and his army had been driven back to Zyp, where they established a defensive live running from Bergen to Alkmaar. The allied army drove the French back again to Egmont-ep-Zee, where they withdrew to Castricum. Brune, fully aware of Boudet’s capabilities, entrusted his advance guard to the thirty-one year old general. Boudet did not disappoint him.\\footnote{Ibid., 7.}

Around 5:00 a.m. on 6 October, French troops were attacked by the numerically superior English force. Boudet and his forces resisted every British attack throughout the day. As darkness fell, Boudet made a critical decision and seized the offensive. Boudet, showing his audacity and optimism, encouraged his soldiers to intensify their efforts and courage. About 7:00 p.m., Boudet, armed and at the head of his troops, stormed the
English on the heights surrounding Castricum. This bold decision succeeded, winning the campaign for the French. Only ten hours after the battle of Castricum, the duke of York surrendered and signed the Treaty of Alkmaar.\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map}
\caption{Map of Holland in 1799}
\label{fig:map}
\end{figure}

\begin{flushright}
From Gachot, \textit{Les Campagnes de 1799}, 205.
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
Boudet’s part in this campaign has been neglected by all except for his superior, Brune. In a letter of 19 October 1799, Brune addressed the Directory and praised Boudet, declaring “[he is] one of generals, who, by their talents and their personal bravery, have contributed to our success.”

This recognition acknowledged the contributions of Boudet came from a man who would become a marshal of France. It was also indicative of Boudet’s early career as well as shades of his future activities.

Boudet’s actions through the first nearly fifteen years of his military career laid the foundations for the next decade. He showed great heroism and an unselfish dedication in achieving his objective and creating a bond with his men. Overcoming numerical superiority both in the Antilles and in Holland, he proved that this fearless general believed in his men and the ultimate victory of their cause. His effective leadership ability became apparent from his first service under Moncey in the Pyrenees. A true indication of his ability was reflected in his rise to the rank of general of division within a span of four years.

The year 1799 marked the end of the first phase of the military career of General Jean Boudet. In 1800, the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte resulted in several major battles. Boudet would only take part in a couple of these combats, but he still found a way to display his leadership and courage. Nonetheless, Boudet would have the opportunity to serve under Napoleon and become engaged in some of the greatest battles in 19th century Europe.

25 Brune to Minister [Name Unknown], 19 October, 1799, Ibid, 8.
Napoleon Bonaparte claimed the title of First Consul in the coup d’état of 18 Brumaire. However, his position as head of the French government was far from secure, especially while France was engaged in the War of the Second Coalition. With this in mind, Bonaparte resolved to embark on a campaign in the spring of 1800 to end the war and solidify his position. The geography of northern Italy contained mountainous terrain and fast flowing rivers. Bonaparte’s Army of Reserve would traverse this mountainous terrain in pursuit of their leader’s goal: a decisive victory over the Austrian army. General of Division Jean Boudet commanded a division in this force; leading his men through the region’s difficult topography. Throughout the campaign, and especially at Marengo, Boudet exhibited the leadership and courage that led his division to Marengo and contributed to the French victory there.

The Army of Reserve, created by Bonaparte’s decree of 8 March, was designed originally to relieve pressure on General André Masséna whose army of 25,000 men was starving in the besieged city of Genoa. Consisting of 60,000 men, it was organized in southeastern France, anchored in the city of Dijon. Bonaparte appointed Alexandre Berthier as commander-in-chief, and the division of Boudet fell under the command of Philibert Duhesme. In a daily order issued on 20 April by Berthier’s chief of staff, Pierre Dupont, Boudet’s division consisted of the three initial regiments and the 7th Chasseurs. His generals of brigade were Louis François Musnier, commander of his advance guard, and Bernard Duvigneau. His adjudant general was W. Dalton. By 30 April, the division of Boudet was formed and ready for action.

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1 Napoleon Bonaparte, Arrêté 8 March 1800, Correspondance de Napoleon I publiée par ordre de l’Empereur Napoleon III, No. 4650, VI (Paris, 1858), 217; Bonaparte, Arrêté 8 March 1800, Ibid., No. 4651, 218.  
2 Boudet’s division consisted of the 30th Line, the 59th Line, and the 9th Light Infantry totaling from 7,000 to 8,000 men. Bonaparte to Berthier, 26 April 1800, Ibid., No. 3732, VI, 294.  
4 Bonaparte to Berthier, 26 April 1800, Correspondance de Napoleon I, No. 3732, VI, 295.
Boudet’s journey began with the establishment of his headquarters at Poligny. His entire division was concentrated three hours march from the headquarters.\(^5\) When the army started marching towards Switzerland, the divisions of Jean Jacque Vital Chambarlhac, Boudet and François Watrin set out for Lucerne.\(^6\) By 1 May, Boudet’s division was at Geneva, and a week later it reached Lausanne.\(^7\) The following day, divisions Boudet and Loison occupied Lausanne, but the 9\(^{th}\) Light Infantry, consisting of 2,700 men, had not yet joined the division.\(^8\) By 9 May, the division reached Vevey where Boudet’s command was modified when the 15\(^{th}\) Chasseurs replaced the 7\(^{th}\) Chasseurs.\(^9\) The division of Boudet continued to march towards the mountains, through Bex\(^{10}\) to Saint-Brachier or Orsières.\(^{11}\)

On 16 May, Boudet received the order to cross Great Saint-Bernard Pass and continue on to Étroubles. The same day, the division began to climb to Saint-Pierre. The passage for the artillery was difficult and strenuous, so part of a battalion of infantry was assigned to aid its march. Boudet’s superior, Duchesme, established his headquarters at Saint-Pierre and was charged with the passage of both divisions of Boudet and Loison.\(^{12}\) After crossing Saint-Bernard, Boudet’s division continued down to Aoste. Beginning their march at 4:00 a.m., Boudet and his division left Étroubles on 18 May. The 12\(^{th}\) Hussars and 21\(^{st}\) Chasseurs joined them. Two companies were left behind, awaiting the division’s artillery.\(^{13}\)

Following the Dora River south, Boudet’s division began its approach to Ft. Bard on 19 May at 7:00 a.m. after a 42 kilometer march from Aoste to Arnaz near the fortress.\(^{14}\) The following day, Boudet’s division surrounded “Fort Bard, which [was] located in a narrow gorge, and that it dominated on all sides; it replaced the division of

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\(^5\) Berthier to the Chief of Staff, The General Staff Service Schools, *Sourcebook of the Marengo Campaign in 1800* (Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1922), 85.

\(^6\) Berthier to Bonaparte, 25 April, 1800, Ibid., 94.

\(^7\) Bonaparte to Berthier, 1 May 1800, *Correspondance de Napoleon I*, No. 4745, VI, 310 ; Berthier to Dupont, 5 May 1800, Cugnac, *Campagne de l’Armée de Réserve*, I, 254; Cugnac, Ibid., 255.

\(^8\) The 9\(^{th}\) Light Infantry, which joined the division later in the campaign, played an integral role in the French victory at the Second Battle of Marengo in June 1800.


\(^12\) Berthier to Dupont, 16 May 1800, Cugnac, *Campagne de l’Armée de Réserve*, I, 397-98 ; Cugnac, Ibid., 397.

\(^13\) Berthier to Dupont,17 May 1800, Ibid., 407 ; Berthier to Dupont, 18 May 1800, Ibid., 410.

\(^14\) Cugnac, Ibid., 436.
The French attacked the Austrian garrison unsuccessfully. There were two alternate passages available to the French by the time that Boudet’s division reached Fort Bard. The first was the road to Albard, which remained undefended, so some companies of the 9th Light Infantry occupied on it 20 May. During the night, troops passed through the village of Bard. The advance guard of the army had already passed the fort, followed by the divisions of Watrin, Boudet, Loison, and the brigade of Chambarlhac. The division of Boudet followed the road by Albard, and on the 21st continued to Donnas, avoiding “the low of the fort in passing the mountain, which had already been crossed by the division of Watrin, the passage [although] it was extremely laborious and that it had, hitherto looked impracticable.” On 22 May, Boudet’s division along with Loison’s force, seized the fort. Not much is said about the actual operations within.

Figure 3: Situation on 24 May just prior to the Battle on the Chiusella

16 Sourcebook, 47-49.
17 Cugnac, Campagne de l’armée de Réserve en 1800, I, 454.; Boudet, Rapport des marches et operations de la division Boudet, Ibid.
18 Sourcebook, 50-1.
Boudet’s division served as the reserve at the Battle on the Chuisella River by supporting General Jean Lannes’ advance guard as it was marching towards Ivrea. Boudet camped on the road to Vercell on 24-25 May. On 26 May, Lannes’s forces attacked the Austrians behind the Chuisella and drove them back along the Turin road.\footnote{Boudet, Rapport des marches et operations de la division Boudet, Cugnac, \textit{Campagne de l’armée de Réserve}, I, 473 ; From the Report of Boudet Division, \textit{Sourcebook}, 132.} The 6\textsuperscript{th} Light Infantry attacked the center on the bridge, while two battalions took heavy enemy fire at the river.\footnote{Extract from the Report of 28 May from Berthier to Bonaparte, Battle on the Chiusella, Ibid., 133.} Although, the Austrians had about 6,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry in the area, the first Austrian line quickly broke. The French 28\textsuperscript{th}, commanded by General of Brigade Claude Gency, forced the Austrians further back.\footnote{Battle on the Chiusella—Lannes Division, Ibid., 134.}

Several units pursued the fleeing Austrians, including part of Boudet’s division. Lannes reported that they were almost out of ammunition, but Boudet’s troops continued to pursue the Austrians.\footnote{Ibid.} They were supported by eighty men of the 11\textsuperscript{th} Hussars, commanded by Major Pierre Ismert, who attacked several times. Boudet reported that there were fourteen casualties from the 11\textsuperscript{th} Hussars. The pursuit continued. His infantry, positioned just past the town of Romano, pursued them into the mountain tops around Foglizzo. The Austrians lost some men and horses while only one chasseur from the 9\textsuperscript{th} Light Infantry was wounded.\footnote{Ibid.} Berthier reported 250 French killed or wounded while the report from Lannes’s division indicated as many as 400 casualties while taking sixty prisoners.\footnote{Extract from the Report of 28 May from Berthier to Bonaparte, Battle on the Chiusella, Ibid., 133.} Austrian losses included 348 men and 216 horses. The Austrian account indicates contrasting totals. The French losses were a lofty 1,700 and their own wounded were approximately 348.\footnote{Extract from the Austrian Military Review, Ibid.,136.}

On 27 May, Boudet’s division reached Santhia along with the division of Loison and the cavalry of Joachim Murat, which were marching towards Vercell.\footnote{L’adjudant-commandant Brossier, Marche de la division Boudet sur Santhia, “Journal de la campagne de l’armée de réserve, \textit{“Campagne de l’armée de Réserve}, II, 24.} The following day, at Vercell, these forces passed the Sesia River. On 29 May, Murat wanted to take the ford near Palestro so that he could turn the Austrian positions. Boudet passed to the left of the town of Vercell, towards Borgo Vercelli. He also sent the 9\textsuperscript{th} Light
Infantry to assist Jean-Charles Monnier’s division, under the command of Murat. The objective of the 9th Light was to secure the ford for Murat’s column. Boudet remembered that “it had much to do and endure to overcome the current.”²⁷ Four men drowned, but the determination of the other men remained strong. The crossing was aided later by the officers and men alike who knew how to swim. By the crossing of the Sesia, the Austrians abandoned the river bank.²⁸

The crossing of the rest of Boudet’s forces was no less laborious or dangerous; neither was Murat’s crossing in which six hussars were swept away. Another man and a horse also fell victim to the river’s fury. Luck aided many, but the majority of those who found safe passage had to thank the cavalry and those who could swim. Some Austrian vedettes on the other bank of the river caused a heightened urgency for speed in the crossing. Boudet saw his troop “in danger [so he] crossed the Sesia four times to accelerate their movements and to inspire them with that confidence which the circumstances rendered necessary.”²⁹ After the crossing, he was ordered to take position behind the Agogna.³⁰

The divisions of Boudet and Loison reached the banks of the Tessin River on 30 May with Boudet’s division in front of Trecate and Loison’s at Vigevano and the surrounding area.³¹ The next day, General Murat’s advance guard passed the Tessin, thanks to the deployment of Boudet and Loison. The first regiment of Boudet’s division reached the bridge in front of Porto di Buffalora with the second regiment behind it. The Austrians occupied the opposite bank in front of Galliate, intrenched and with artillery. The French opened fire and their enemy responded with a cannonade of their own. Two four pounders, manned by the Consular Guard, and two artillery pieces from the division of Boudet overwhelmed the Austrians. Their retreat was accelerated by a French infantry advance across the river.³²

The opposition to the French did not end there. Austrian reinforcements arrived under General Johann Loudon at Turbigo. The division of Monnier, the advance guard,

²⁷ From the Report of Boudet Division, Sourcebook, 139-40.  
²⁸ Ibid., 140.  
²⁹ Ibid.  
³⁰ Extract from the Journal of Campaign of the Army of Reserve by Adjutant Major Brossier, Ibid., 137.  
³² From the Report of the Boudet Division, Ibid., 147.
along with grenadiers from Boudet’s second regiment neutralized the threat. The Austrians lost 700, of whom 400 were prisoners. General Louis Charles Guenaud’s brigade positioned themselves in front of Turbigo. After making sure the Tessin was crossed safely, Boudet left his troops and moved opposite Porto di Buffalora to join his first regiment which was under the orders of Duhesme and was crossing the Tessin. The crossing of Boudet’s first regiment was difficult. The Austrians had cut the bridges and sunk the French boats. More boats were brought up from further down the river. That evening only fifteen men crossed the Tessin with the aid of swimmers from the 9th Light Infantry. They drove a small group of Austrians from Buffalora. Only one man drowned. On the 1st, the rest of the 9th Light and Boudet’s second demi-brigade crossed the Tessin and continued on to Buffalora. The division followed Murat’s advance guard to Corbetta on the road to Milan.33

The next day, Murat’s forces with Napoleon at the head entered Milan; the troops of Boudet and Loison followed.34 Boudet’s division camped along the road to Lodi that night. Orders were given to leave for Lodi on 3 June. As the divisions Boudet and Loison advanced, they attacked the Austrian forces at Melegnano. Boudet was at the head of the first battalion of the 9th Light Infantry, serving as the advance guard. The Austrian force, about 1,200 infantry and 800 cavalry, was commanded by Field Marshal Lieutenant Vukassevich. The Austrians defended the bridge on the Lambro River with two cannons and provided stubborn resistance to the French attack. The 9th Light Infantry received orders to seize the bridge. The Austrians, fearful of losing their artillery, launched two cavalry charges, both in vain. The Austrian Legion of Bussy provided stiff resistance to the French, but after two hours of fighting, the French were victorious. According to Duhesme’s account, the Austrian cavalry lost about 150 prisoners, including four or five officers of the Legion of Bussy. Accordingly, he also praised the division of Boudet for their efforts on the field of battle.35

Boudet led his troops across the Adda River near the town of Lodi. They left on the morning of 4 June at 6:00 a.m. marching towards Lodi. Boudet’s division advanced

33 From the Report of Boudet Division, Sourcebook, 147-48; Extrait du rapport des marches et operations de la division Boudet, Cugnac, Campagne de l’armée de Réserve, II, 77.
34 Berthier to Dupont, 3 June 1800, Ibid., II, 94.
35 Extrait du rapport des marches et opérations de la division Boudet, Ibid., 95; Extrait du rapport des opérations militaires du lieutenant General Duhesme, Ibid., 94-95.
on the town where they found the Austrians had a strong observation post on the other
bank of the Adda, but they retreated after some gunfire. The bridge had to be repaired,
and once completed, the 9th Light Infantry and the 11th Hussars pursued them beyond the
Adda and took fifteen prisoners. The reconnaissance continued until the evacuated town
of Crema. Boudet’s division, after repairing the bridge, took the following positions: the
9th Light Infantry was a mile and a half beyond of the bridge, the 11th Hussars were at the
head of the bridge, and two other battalions of that demi-brigade, and the 59th Line,
serving as the reserve, bivouacked to the right side of the river.36

The same day an order reached General Murat to proceed quickly to Lodi. Once
there, he would take command of Boudet’s division. His objective was to cross the Po
River at the town of Plaisance. Murat, with the division of Boudet, left Lodi at 3:00 a.m.
on 5 June. The 11th Hussars were ordered to secure their march down the road to
Plaisance because the enemy occupied a position at Pizzighettone. They drove back the
vedettes before Fombio until they reached the bridgehead. There was a minor skirmish
where four Austrians were taken prisoner and the rest were chased to the bridgehead,
which was defended by twelve guns and 500 to 600 infantry. The other bank had
additional artillery that threatened the flanks of French positions.37

Boudet resolved to form his troops into three columns. The ones on the right and
left were comprised of the 9th Light, and the center included three companies of
grenadiers and the 1st battalion of the 59th Line. The first two columns moved along the
river to flank and secure the bridgehead. The center was meant to charge the Austrian
positions at the optimal moment, but Boudet advised against a frontal attack because the
Austrian artillery would have proved too deadly. The first two columns deployed, but
were met by strong artillery fire on the sides of the bridgehead. For about fifteen minutes,
the front of these two columns was exposed to enemy fire. According to the Austrians, at
about 2:00 p.m. the French were about 500 steps from the bridgehead. A fusillade greeted
the attackers, and Boudet’s forces were pushed back. Boudet then moved his guns
forward, firing on the bridgehead. On the right bank of the Po, were sixteen Austrian

36 Rapport des marches and operations de la division Boudet, Cugnac, Campagne de l’armée de réserve, II,
105; Journal de la campagne de l’armée de réserve, par l’adjudant-commandant Brossier, Ibid ; Paulet to
37 From the Report of Boudet Division, Sourcebook, 153; Extrait du Journal de la campagne de l’armée de
réserve, par l’adjudant-commandant Brossier, Cugnac, Campagne de l’armée de réserve, II, 168.
guns that flanked the French artillery fire. After several attacks, the French operation had to be called off until darkness. However, some troops with Generals Boudet, Musnier and Adjudant General Dalton were very close to the bridgehead. With the protection of ditches, they were able to open gunfire against the Austrians defending the bridgehead. Boudet remembered that the Austrians admitted to losing 330 men.\footnote{Report of Boudet Division, \textit{Sourcebook}, 153; From the Austrian Military Review, Ibid., 154.}

As night fell, the Austrians guns ceased their fire from the bridgehead and were withdrawn, but they still had guns on the other side of the river bank. It was at this instant that five chasseurs and Major Caseau, of the 9\textsuperscript{th} Light Infantry, attacked the bridgehead and took eighty prisoners. As Boudet recounted, “[the Austrians] seeing themselves at first surrounded only by six men, wanted to resist, but the audacity and firmness of the officer and five soldiers who had moved in so valiantly held them just long enough to allow a reinforcement to arrive.”\footnote{Report of Boudet Division, \textit{Sourcebook}, 154.} The bridge was now open but not without cost for Boudet’s division. Five hundred were killed, the better part by artillery fire.\footnote{Extrait du Journal de la campagne de l’armée de réserve, par l’adjudant-commandant Brossier, Cugnac, \textit{Campagne de l’armée de réserve}, II, 168-9 ; Report of Boudet Division, \textit{Sourcebook}, 154.}

At 2:00 a.m. on 7 June, Boudet’s division began the march towards Nocetto. When they arrived there, the 9\textsuperscript{th} Light Infantry were the first to begin crossing the Po River. General Musnier, commander of the 1\textsuperscript{st} demi-brigade, crossed and regrouped his men on the other side to await the remainder of the troops. Information arrived that the Austrians had received reinforcements and awaited more, so Musnier wasted no time in marching to Plaisance. Met by Austrian cavalry, the French responded by forming in close column and drove the horseman back. Musnier knew that time was vital as he entered the city quickly before the Austrian position was consolidated.\footnote{There is some discrepancy concerning the casualty totals for this action. Contrary to Boudet’s total, Brossier said there were fifteen men killed and fifty-six wounded from the 9\textsuperscript{th} Light Infantry and eight men killed and twenty-two from the 59\textsuperscript{th}. There is not a real explanation for the large difference between the two totals. Brossier, Journal de la campagne de l’armée de réserve, Cugnac, \textit{Campagne de l’armée de réserve}, II, 169.}

While General Munsiern was seizing Plaisance, General Boudet crossed the Po River with his grenadiers of the 59\textsuperscript{th} Line and prepared to support Musnier’s attack on the town. He arrived at the gate when the combat began. Boudet sent word to Munsiern “to keep his troops united so that the enemy might not profit by the scattering which is

\footnote{Report of Boudet Division, \textit{Sourcebook}, 158-59.}
unavoidable in the pursuit through a large city.”

Boudet’s warning was not needed because the Austrians had fallen into disorder and retreated back to the safety of the citadel where they maintained a steady fire until surrendering. The French took 1,200 Austrians prisoner and 150 were killed or wounded. The 9th Light had twenty men killed and wounded.44

Remaining at the bridgehead was the 3rd battalion of the 59th Line under the command of Major Pastre. He saw the enemy trying to save some artillery pieces on the other side of the river. Although the bridge was cut, Boudet resolved to seize it. Leading about a dozen swimmers, officers and regular soldiers down to the bank, they plunged into the river. Tragically, while crossing, they swam into a whirlpool where an officer and six soldiers swirled under to their deaths.45

Boudet’s division was now entirely at Plaisance: one unit blocked the citadel and another deployed around the St. Lazare gate; the last detachment held the Parma road where the Austrian reinforcements were expected. They also tried to rebuild the bridge but the height of the river made it difficult to repair. Eventually, they had to abandon this task. Two bridges were built instead so the cavalry could pass. The 11th Hussars, under Ismert, crossed and then watched the Parma road for the enemy reinforcements. About 5:00 p.m., the first line of the Austrians was detected; using artillery as their shield, they drove the 11th Hussars back, but it was an orderly retreat.46

Alerted to this enemy threat, Boudet immediately assembled his forces to counter them. The defense included three companies of grenadiers from the 59th Line, who stood in columns on the highroad and were under the command of Dalton. To the left and right of this column stood another battalion of the 59th Line to harass the Austrian flank after sending out skirmishers. Without waiting for the flanking units to attack first, the grenadiers charged the Austrians. Artillery shots took out about twenty men but the grenadiers stood firm. Although the Austrians were far stronger with about 1,000 men and supported by artillery, they retreated, pursued by the French.47

43 Ibid, 159.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
As night fell, the 11th Hussars attacked with Boudet at their head, leading to the ensuing surrender of the Austrian force. On these actions of the 5th and 7th, Boudet recounted that they had taken 2,000 prisoners, fifty men killed or wounded, thirteen artillery pieces, two flags, some supplies and thirty larger boats containing a valuable food supply. The next evening, General Murat left Plaisance with Boudet’s division to rejoin the rest of the army.48

Thus far, the Austrians had avoided the decisive battle that Bonaparte sought. During the first week of June, the First Consul continued to search for the bulk of the Habsburg army. He dispatched Boudet’s division to help cover the possible Austrian retreat routes. Reconnaissance on 13 June did not locate the Austrian Army. Napoleon, convinced that Mélas’ army was maneuvering, thought that they were moving towards Genoa to end the siege of Masséna there. He gave this as his reasoning for sending Desaix’s corps to observe the road from Novi to Alessandria.49 Boudet provided more detail concerning their orders to move south towards Pozzolo-Formigaro where they could attack Alessandria or cut off the road.50

On 13 June, heavy rain impeded the march of Boudet’s division. With better weather they could have reached the other side of the Scrivia River, at Rivalta by nightfall, but they faced a dangerous crossing. At dawn, the river still remained too high, but they secured a boat to pass over the river to Rivalta. By 10:00 a.m., the river had receded and the artillery followed across the river. General Louis Charles Desaix received orders to move to Pozzolo-Formigaro. Boudet did not mention the exact time of these orders, but they were late.51

48 Ibid.
50 Report of Boudet Division, Sourcebook, 199. There are several versions that document the movements of Desaix’s corps prior to their march to Marengo. These include those of General Auguste Marmont and Anne Jean Marie René Savary, Desaix’s aide de camp. The most thorough of these documents was the journal kept by Boudet, commander of the division. George Armand Furse in Marengo and Hohenlinden, went into detail about the accuracy of the sources on the movements of the corps. He deemed Boudet’s report the best. Also, he mentioned that De Cugnac endorsed Boudet’s journal. For accuracy, clarity, and merely because Boudet and his forces were the focus of this study, Boudet’s report will be used as the primary document throughout with accents from other sources where necessary. George Armand Furse, 1800: Marengo and Hohenlinden (London, 1903), 378.
51 From the Report of Boudet Division,” Sourcebook, 199.
Boudet’s division was only about a mile from Rivalta when word reached him concerning the ongoing Battle of Marengo, with orders to return to San-Giulano. The return of Desaix and his corps to the battlefield of Marengo has become almost a myth for many who were present at the battle. Some claimed that Desaix heard the cannon from Marengo and halted the march himself. Both Boudet and his chief of staff W. Dalton did not indicate any such noise. In Edouard Gachot’s *La Deuxième Campagne d’Italie*, he cited Dalton’s letter to Berthier, and he claimed the his own mythical interpretation of Desaix hearing the canons. Edouard Gachot, *La Deuxième Campagne d’Italie* (Paris, 1899), 297-98.

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52 Ibid. The return of Desaix and his corps to the battlefield of Marengo has become almost a myth for many who were present at the battle. Some claimed that Desaix heard the cannon from Marengo and halted the march himself. Both Boudet and his chief of staff W. Dalton did not indicate any such noise. In Edouard Gachot’s *La Deuxième Campagne d’Italie*, he cited Dalton’s letter to Berthier, and he claimed the his own mythical interpretation of Desaix hearing the canons. Edouard Gachot, *La Deuxième Campagne d’Italie* (Paris, 1899), 297-98.
march began at approximately 1:00 p.m. Boudet claimed that their march was quickened, but it was in the heat the afternoon.\textsuperscript{53}

The details pertaining to the first half of the Battle of Marengo are far less important than the results indicated by the generals who fought it. The Austrians troops marched out of the city of Alessandria and attacked the French lines at about 9:00 a.m. The Austrians were 30,000 strong with over 100 artillery pieces. The French were at about a two to one disadvantage without Boudet’s division. According to the report of General Perrin Victor, who commanded a division at Marengo, the Austrians deployed in three columns: one along the Bormida River, the center towards Marengo, and the left marched on Castel Ceriolo. There was some success, primarily by General Jean Lannes’ division, but the strength of the Austrians cut this success short. After many hours of hard fighting, both Lannes and Victor had to order the retreats. The worst of the fighting fell on Generals Auguste-Marie-Henri Dampierre and Olivier Rivaud. Dampierre reported that of his 300 men, 194 were wounded including nearly all of the officers. Rivaud’s brigade fought in an open field without artillery support. By the end of the first phase of the battle, the Army of Reserve had suffered 6,000 casualties, decimated its cavalry, and had lost over two-thirds of its artillery.\textsuperscript{54}

While Victor insisted that the retreat occurred in order, others claimed to the contrary. When Boudet arrived on the battlefield at about 5:00 p.m., he “witnessed the disorder caused on the one hand by a great number of wounded with the comrades leading them, obstructing the way, and on the other by the numbers of carts, and the crowd of servants, with the good for nothing soldiers who usually join them.”\textsuperscript{55} Even Bonaparte had this to say about Victor’s retreat:

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\textsuperscript{53} Report of Boudet Division, \textit{Sourcebook}, 199.


\textsuperscript{55}Report of Boudet Division, \textit{Sourcebook}, 199.
And the division under Victor having been forced to give way after a stubborn resistance, was thrown into the utmost disorder. The plain on the left was covered with our fugitives, who spread alarm wherever they went, and many were even exclaiming in dismay, ‘All is lost.’

Victor did not want to admit to a disorderly retreat because he took every precaution to maintain an orderly withdrawal. However, all these precautions could not ease the minds of the officers and men when the divisions of Victor and Lannes had less than a combined 15,000 men to oppose 30,000 enemy troops. Victor’s predicament can be best attributed to the intelligence breakdown prior to the battle. Napoleon had sent two forces to look for the Austrians the day before the battle. General Jean-François Lapoype was sent to the north and Boudet to the south to look for the Austrian Army when, in fact, it was at Alessandria staring at the French from across the river. Nevertheless, the French soldiers on the battlefield of Marengo were still unaware, but all was not lost.

General Mélas, unlike his counterpart on the battlefield, was not a young man. Mounted since the before morning light on 14 June, Mélas had grown weary and decided to retire once he saw the French retreat. When he arrived back in Alessandria, Mélas wished nothing more than to inform the Austrian Emperor Francis I quickly of what he perceived as a great Austrian victory. Colonel Josef Radetsky wrote the deposition, boasting: “After a lengthy and bloody battle on the plains of Marengo, the troops of His Majesty the Emperor have thoroughly beaten the French Army which was led into Italy and directed in the fight by General Bonaparte.” Mélas’ victory announcement was too soon. He had neglected the brilliance soon to appear on the plains of Marengo.

General Anton Zach, now in command of the battlefield, did not order a strong pursuit of the weakened French forces. By about 4:00 p.m., Bonaparte’s forces could present only limited resistance to the Austrians, far superior in numbers. The entire French line withdrew, shifting towards San Guiliano. With the French troops demoralized and in retreat, Zach recognized an opportunity to destroy the French divisions before him. He hesitated. Instead of pursuing the retreating French, he merely covered what he believed to be their best escape route, along the Marengo-Tortona road. Zach deployed

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56 Napoleon’s Memoirs, 467.
57 Furse, Marengo and Hohenlinden, 384-85.
58 Radetsky in Ibid, 385.
one massive column led by an advance guard. Cavalry were stationed on the left of the column in two lines. When the movement began, the Austrian Army was not yet deployed. They thought heavy resistance had been crushed, but were surprised by the French resurgence as the Austrian’s advanced.\textsuperscript{59}

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\textbf{Figure 5: The Second Battle of Marengo 14 June 1800 about 5:00 p.m.}

From Esposito, \textit{Military Atlas}, Map # 43.

\textsuperscript{59} Furse, Ibid., 387-89.
In the words of General Marmont: “It was nearly five o’clock, and the Boudet Division on which rested our safety and our hopes had not yet arrived. Finally, shortly after it rejoined us.”

With the return of the division of Boudet, the French retreat was halted and new hope spread throughout the troops. Rallying behind the hills of San Giuliano, a reinvigorated the French Amy was ready to fight. It was reinforced by General François Kellermann’s brigade (reduced to 400 men and two to three hundred cavalry), and the remains of brigade of Champeaux on the left of the road to Tortona. The Consular Guard of 600 strong and the remnants the divisions of Lannes and Victor were on the right. This force was supported by eighteen cannons under Marmont. In total, Bonaparte had approximately 11,000 infantry, 1,200 cavalry and eighteen artillery pieces. Of that force, Boudet’s division accounted for 4,850 infantry, 120 hussars, 123 cuirassiers and 110 cannoneers.

Upon the arrival of Boudet’s division, Desaix met with the First Consul. Much debate has surrounded these moments concerning the nature and composition of the meeting. Marmont was present and recorded a brief description of the conference but not enough to have drawn a definitive conclusion.

While the meeting was in progress, General Boudet moved his first brigade to the left of the road, several battalions were deployed and the remainder in column. The second formation mirrored the first on the right side of the road. Both General Boudet and Desaix agreed to move the first brigade, the 9th Light Infantry, forward to help restore the morale of the retreating troops and encourage them to return to action. Boudet advanced his troops toward the front of the Austrian lines. Within range of the Austrian fire, he sent skirmishers ahead. This move provided critical time for Boudet’s second brigade, comprised of the 30th and 59th Lines to establish themselves to the right of the

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60 Auguste Marmont, Memoires du Maréchal Marmont duc de Raguse de 1792 à 1841 (Paris, 1857), II, 131.
61 Kellermann to Victor, Castilanuova, 15 June 1800, Sourcebook, 201; François C. Edmond Kellermann, Duc de Valmy, Histoire de la Campagne de 1800 (Paris, 1854), 178; Furse, Marengo and Hohenlinden, 394.
62 Many historians have elevated the role that Desaix played in the conference but in reality, Napoleon was never in favor of a democracy. (Furse, Marengo and Hohenlinden, 392.) Apparently there was no reliable account of what happened during this conference.
first brigade. The remaining forces that had fought in the morning rallied behind them. All the artillery was set up in front of Boudet’s first brigade.  

As the first brigade moved further ahead, Boudet received orders from Desaix to withdraw them in echelons. Boudet recognized that this move would compromise his skirmishers, so he executed the order slowly. He returned to consult with Desaix about the details of the operation. However, Desaix instructed him to halt the backwards movement. He did so and they had only moved back about 200 paces according to Boudet. There was further debate here between Boudet and Desaix concerning the execution of the movements of the division.  

As Boudet’s infantry advanced against the Austrian column, Desaix’s heart was pierced by a single bullet. Bonaparte recounted in his memoir of the battle that, “this misfortune [Desaix’s death] by no means disconcerted the movement, and General Boudet easily inspired the soldiers with the same lively desire of instant revenge for so beloved a chief, which actuated his own breast.” Boudet did indeed inspire the troops,

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63 Report of Boudet Division, Sourcebook, 199-200.
64 Ibid., 200. This part cannot be fully recounted because reliable primary information is unavailable. Boudet talked about their command on different sides but never mentioned in his report what was said between the two generals in conference before the counterattack. Armand Sauzet is very vague in his description of the “debate” between Boudet and Desaix in his work, Le Sultan Juste. Sauzet, Le Sultan Juste (Paris 1954), 292.
65 Imaginations have abounded concerning the death of Lieutenant General Desaix. His death has often been remembered by both historians and even his fellow generals as a very mythical, dramatic, and a moment of great inspiration for the troops of Boudet’s division. The stories and facts must be better discerned to fully understand the impact of Boudet and his troops. General Boudet mentioned the death of Desaix in his writings but nothing to the extent described.
66 Napoleon’s Memoirs, 468.
but Desaix’s death has overshadowed the acts and leadership of his subordinate who led
the division of Boudet for the remainder of the battle.

The 9th Light Infantry’s advance was contested by Zach’s first line consisting of
Michel Wallis’s regiment and Hungarian grenadiers. According to Boudet, the enemy
grenadiers received support from many cavalry. The Austrian cavalry attempted to flank
the 9th Light several times, but each failed. Boudet’s second brigade, which he led
personally, “with really astonishing boldness, strength, and rapidity, pierced the centre of
the enemy’s army and cut it asunder.”67 The second brigade was under constant attack
from the rear, especially from Austrian cavalry. However, the terrain, covered with vines
and other obstacles, hampered and hurt the Austrian cavalry. With the advance of the
Austrian infantry came the rain of artillery fire from Marmont’s eighteen guns. This fire
alarmed the overconfident Austrians, forcing them to retreat. This advantage was short-
lived for the French, but now Austrian victory in jeopardy. Marmont’s guns pounded
them for approximately twenty minutes prior to the attack by Boudet’s division. The
French moved the artillery forward.68

The pivotal moments in the second battle of Marengo arrived. General
Kellermann’s cavalry had been following behind Boudet’s division by about 400 paces. It
consisted of the 2nd, 6th, and 20th cavalry with about 150 horses. Kellermann platooned it
with the 1st and 2nd squadrons of the 8th Dragoons. In total, he had about 600 cavalry.
They followed Boudet’s division in a singular line awaiting their opportunity.
Kellermann noticed that some of the French infantry, on the left of the road, were
breaking up and soon would be charged by Austrian grenadiers. He did not waste a
second and deployed his cavalry to aid the infantry. His cavalry annihilated three
battalions of grenadiers and the entire regiment of Wallis.69

General Marmont’s artillery pounded the Austrians as they neared the 30th Line
commanded by Boudet. He had observed that the 30th had been thrown into disorder so
he came to their rescue. Kellermann then spied another enticing target. He still had 200
cavalry left, so he charged the Austrian cavalry of General Johann Liechtenstein, on the

67 General Jean Boudet in Furse, Marengo and Hohenlinden, 395.
68 Marmont, Mémoires de Marmont, II, 132-33; Boudet in Furse, Marengo and Hohenlinden, 395.
69 Kellermann to Victor, Sourcebook, 201; Terry Gordon, The Early Life and Career of François-Etienne
Kellermann 1770-1811 (Florida State University M.A., 1979), 59; Furse, Marengo and Hohenlinden, 397.
Austrian flank north of the road around Guasca. This action sealed the defeat of the Austrian advance guard and reinforced the French determination. With that accomplished, the French divisions surged forward with renewed zeal against the Austrians. \textsuperscript{70} Victory now seemed possible. Kellermann charged Liechtenstein’s cavalry. As the Austrian cavalry took flight, Pilatti’s Austrian brigade followed them; this brigade hid behind General Peter-Carl Ott’s column in the rear of the main force.

The flight of the Austrian dragoons had far reaching consequences. The entire Austrian center was overtaken by the fleeing dragoons while they were trying to deploy. Lannes troops, the Consular Guard, and Monnier’s division sent their forces, and the Austrian center began to collapse. Again, at the ideal moment, Kellermann launched yet another successful charge that crushed the Austrian center. Mass confusion ensued in the Austrian Army. Men turned and fled without the chance of being reformed. They ran for the safety of the Bormida River. \textsuperscript{71}

Unlike the Austrians earlier in the afternoon, the French fully intended to harass the retreating Austrians. Generals Karl Philipp Weidenfeld and O’Reilly had been ordered to defend the stream of Fontanone to provide time for the retreat. Boudet and Lannes pressed the attack as the Austrians began to give way. The French captured Marengo. The Austrians were pushed back to Pedrabona where Ott’s corps joined with them. The Austrians lost approximately 7,000 to 8,000 prisoners. The French casualties were 600 killed, 1,500 wounded and 500 prisoners. These totals were seconded in the “Bulletin of the Army of Reserve” the following day. The “Bulletin” also mentioned that among the injured was Boudet. Despite his leadership and contributions to the victory at Marengo, this mention was the only appearance of his name in the entire document. \textsuperscript{72} General Pierre Dupont printed another report. Totals for the enemy losses included a casualties list of 12,000 men divided into 6,000 prisoners, 4,000 wounded and 2,000 killed. \textsuperscript{73}

The French had achieved an astounding victory. Napoleon further solidified his already lofty military and political standing. At the brink of defeat, Boudet’s division

\textsuperscript{70} Marmont, \textit{Mémoires de Marmont}, II, 133; Furse, \textit{Marengo and Hohenlinden}, 396, 398-99.
\textsuperscript{71} Furse, \textit{Marengo and Hohenlinden}, 399-400.
\textsuperscript{72} Furse, \textit{Marengo and Hohenlinden}, 400-01; Berthier to Bonaparte, 14 June at 9:00 p.m., \textit{Sourcebook}, 204; Bulletin de l’armée de réserve, 15 June 1800, \textit{Correspondance de Napoleon I}, No. 4910, VI, 455.
\textsuperscript{73} Dupont to Minister of War, 17 June 1800, \textit{Sourcebook}, 207.
arrived to offer renewed hope and spirit where it had waned. General Jean Boudet was not Desaix; he could not win the battle alone. Yet his courage, determination and leadership enabled the French to win at Marengo. Boudet boasted that “the remarkable advantages which were gained on the left, and above all the capture of the artillery and prisoners, were absolutely due to the bearing and acts of valour of this corps. The cavalry has equally contributed to it by its timely action and courage.”

His words captured the nature of the French victory at Marengo. Their arrival encouraged hope in the troops at Marengo. It affected the retreating corps of Lannes and Victor. The 9th Light Infantry undoubtedly lived up to the name bannered on its flag: *l’Incomparable*, for their bravery. Kellermann’s charges were vital, but without the arrival of division Boudet’s, Kellermann never would have charged at Marengo.

Throughout the entire campaign, Boudet displayed mature leadership and courage for his troops. Through the treacherous topography of Northern Italy, Boudet led his troops not only in combat, but also in conquering the perils of nature. The river crossings posed a particularly dangerous situation. The crossing of the Sesia was a prime example of Boudet’s courage and leadership capabilities. Without regard for himself, he crossed the river four times to encourage his troops when he saw they were in danger from an Austrian attack. Without effective leadership surrounding the rivers in the area, many more soldiers might have drowned. These unselfish actions, repeated by those of his men, created a bond of trust and loyalty and formed a truly formidable fighting force.

The Battle of Marengo was Boudet’s first major combat. His contributions to this battle were vital. First, without the arrival of Boudet’s command, the battle could have been lost. The troops that had fought earlier in the day were exhausted and decimated; but the arrival of fresh troops on the battlefield, enabled them to reform and regain a sense of hope. Second, Boudet’s transition after the death of Desaix was flawless. The transition was important in the midst of battle, so there was no hesitation or confusion.

Boudet’s role in the battle has often been overshadowed by Desaix’s death. Historiography has often credited the French victory to Kellermann, Desaix, or Marmont. This interpretation is not entirely accurate. Kellermann and Marmont both had roles to play in the victory, but it was Boudet who contributed the most to ultimate victory. Most

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74 Boudet in Furse, *Marengo and Hohenlinden*, 421.
secondary sources cede credit to Desaix, who has been portrayed in many was as a martyr. Desaix’s death, though an unfortunate loss, occurred immediately upon Boudet’s division taking the field. Boudet led the forces through the second half of the battle, not Desaix.

However, the importance of Boudet’s presence on 14 June was recognized by others present on the field. On the day after the battle, Dupont had a conversation with Crossard. The former, gesturing towards Boudet, said “It was he who gave you the finishing blow.”75 A few days later, Lauriston, recounting on 19 June, attributed Boudet “as having saved the army.” 76 Boudet and his division not only helped to save the army, but also helped to save Bonaparte. Had the division of Boudet never arrived, the fate of the French Army on the battlefield was perilous. This fate also could have been that of Bonaparte, the new First Consul of France. The Battle of Marengo, not only defeated the Austrian Army but solidified Napoleon’s station in the government. Without Boudet and his men, it would not have been possible.

75 Dupont in Furse, Ibid.
76 Lauriston in Furse, Ibid.
Figure 6: Boudet at Marengo
CHAPTER THREE: IN THE SHADOW OF OBSCURITY 1801-1808

The years of 1801-1808 brought relative obscurity to Boudet, who had found such underappreciated glory on the battlefield of Marengo in June 1800. For the next several years, Boudet remained isolated from the glory of the battlefields of Europe. He continued to display, however, his various military talents in every task given to him. The first was his return to the colonies. This move made sense because Boudet already had extensive experience there.

The Peace of Amiens in 1801 had brought disturbing news to the French colonies in the Caribbean about the reinstitution of slavery and a stronger French administration.\(^1\) Since the French now had freedom in the seas without fear of harassment or blockade from the Royal Navy, an expedition to Saint-Domingue was important for several reasons. First, the area was economically important to France. Second, economics set aside, any challenge to French power in Saint-Domingue was a major threat to overall security not just in the Caribbean, but also on the continent.

This challenge came in the form of Toussaint-Louverture, the unquestioned ruler of Saint-Domingue, who had drawn up a constitution on 9 May 1801. The terms of the constitution relieved Toussaint of future obedience to France’s government or Bonaparte. Saint-Domingue would have become an independent state with all power in the hands of Toussaint.\(^2\) Toussaint’s constitution reached France for approval by Bonaparte in October 1801. The First Consul of France was furious at this attempt to usurp his power. However, he moved cautiously because the Peace of Amiens had yet to be concluded.\(^3\) Once it was in force, Bonaparte began to plan for an expeditionary force to Saint-Domingue.

The generals selected for the expeditions included officers who had previous experience in the Caribbean. Besides Boudet, Edme-Etienne Borne Desfournes, François-Marie Périchou Kerverseau, and Jean-Baptiste-Donatien Rochambeau all made

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3 Ibid., 169.
the voyage.⁴ The expedition, consisting of 32,000 men, embarked from several French ports, including Rochefort, Brest, Lorient, Toulon, and Cadiz.⁵ On 3 February, Boudet’s ship was nearing Port-Républicain, on the east side of Saint-Domingue. The fort there was well fortified and defended by 4,000 men.⁶

Figure 7: Map of Saint-Domingue 1802
From Cyril Lionel Robert James, The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution (New York, 1963), [After title page]

⁵ Madiou, Histoire d’Haïti, II, 163 ; Domy, Un Bordelais Méconnu, 12.
⁶ Domy, Un Bordelais Méconnu, 12.
The division consisted of 3,000 men that had been transported across the Atlantic Ocean with six ships and two frigates under the command of rear-admiral Louis-René-Madeleine Levassor Latouche-Tréville. The Bay of Gonâve fell calm and caused a delay in the disembarking of the division. Finally, Latouche-Tréville and Boudet were both impatient to unload. On 3 February, an aide de camp of Boudet, a Chief of Brigade Sabès, and a naval officer went to the town bearing the proclamation from Bonaparte and other dispatches. 7 Toussaint had placed General Pierre Agé in command of the port. Agé considered simply turning the port over to the French. However, his subordinate, Lamartinière opposed this idea. 8 The next day, Agé wrote to Boudet stating that the rebel chief Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who commanded an enemy army of indigents, was not at Port-Républicain and that he had to wait for further instructions. Boudet was also informed that Agé’s authority was being undermined by his superiors so they had to disembark immediately. 9

After landing, the division of Boudet set off for Port-Républicain or Port-au-Prince where 10 Lamartinière had about 2,400 men to defend the port. On 5 February, about 10:00 a.m., Boudet’s forces disembarked at Lametin, about 4 kilometers south of Port-Republicain. The French troops had barely landed when the alarm went off and the local residents began slaughtering the white inhabitants of the island. 11 Boudet advanced at the head of 3,500 men, many veterans. Before taking Port-Républicain, the French had to take the smaller forts that surrounded it. A representative was sent to Fort Bizton to inform them that Boudet’s forces were taking over the fort, and nothing would be changed in the colony. Meanwhile, Boudet addressed his grenadiers, “Comrades march [to your] weapons to arm, under the canon of the fort, because you are the ground of

12 Alexis, *Black Liberator*, 177. Madiou argued that Boudet had 6,000 men. This is the only source that has indicated such a high number. Madiou, *Histoire d’Haiti*, II, 183.
France.”13 The French forces met the 13th battalion of local troops guarding the fort, and soon they took possession. Boudet then halted the advance and sent Colonel d’Henin to Fort Léogane to demand the surrender of the troops defending it. However, Lamartinière ordered the cavalry from his honor guard to dismount and fight the French in the trenches. D’Henin assured him, that the French were not there to fight them. Boudet, not pleased with the delay, sent his grenadiers forward. A bloody altercation ensued. Latouche-Tréville and his ship fired on the fort. Boudet, again at the head of his troops, rushed forward and broke into Port-Républicain pursing the fleeing defenders. His chasseurs were going down the large street but were stopped from the strong fire by the 3rd Colonial Infantry, but the tenacity and courage of the Republican soldiers overpowered their enemy. In the following days, colonial commanders surrendered in succession to Boudet.14 Port Républicain was occupied on the 6th.15

Five days after the occupation of Port-Républicain, Boudet learned that Dessalines’s troops were was in the plain of Cul-de-Sac.16 Ordered by General in Chief Charles Leclerc, Boudet sent 2,000 men to occupy Croix des Bouquets. The French seized it without resistance. Dessalines, commander of the rebel forces, retreated into the mountain of Grand Bois.17

Boudet sent two detachments to seize Arcahaie and the department of the south. The first, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Valabrège approached Arcahaie. General Charles Béclair, in charge of the colonial forces there, evacuated the town and burned it while taking the 7th demi-brigade and the entire population to Matheux. With 1,400 men, Adjudant-General Darbois was sent to the department of the south where Dessalines collected his forces.18 Soon, General Boudet could report success in the campaign in the western and southern departments of the colony. He informed Leclerc that they had taken everything from the village of Arcahaie to Tiburon.19

On 13 February 1802, three ships and a frigate unloaded troops, including Boudet, from Port-Républicain before Saint-Marc. The troops rowed to shore under fire, while the

13 Madiou, Histoire d’Haiti, II, 183.
14 Ibid., 183-86.
15 Leclerc to Decrès, 15 February 1802, Leclerc, Lettres, 89.
16 Madiou, Histoire d’Haiti, II, 186.
17 Leclerc to Decrès, 27 February 1802, Ibid., 104.
18 Madiou, Histoire d’Haiti, II, 195.
19 Ibid., 203.
ship that carried Boudet, “l’Aigle,” carefully moved near the shore. It turned to fire and was hit by two shots causing considerable damage. Nevertheless, the ships managed to unload the troops at Montrouis between Saint-Marc and Arcahaie.\textsuperscript{20}

Two day later, on 17 February 1802, Boudet’s division marched on Mirebalais with 2,400 men.\textsuperscript{21} The 56\textsuperscript{th} French demi-brigade and the 13\textsuperscript{th} colonial formed the advance guard, under the orders of Adjudant-General Henin. Two weeks later d’Henin seized the post at Trianon, but lost sixty of his men.\textsuperscript{22}

As French forces continued to reestablish their authority over the island, the division of Boudet, along with other French divisions formed part of the force attacking Crête-à-Pierrot. Boudet’s division received heavy fire from the defenders soon after they crossed the Artibonite River. The French engaged in a stubborn altercation with the forces of Dessalines, and the cavalry under Morisset and Monpoint. Soon, General Leclerc left Port Républicain to direct the siege personally. Boudet was replaced by Pamphile de Lacroix because he had suffered a wound during the fighting. He was only one of the 600 casualties to the division of Boudet during the battle that day.\textsuperscript{23} The bloody, but for the French successful, siege of Crête-à-Pierrot continued as Lacroix commanded the division in Boudet’s absence.

As a result of his wounds, Boudet was sent back to Guadeloupe in April 1802 by Leclerc. He believed that Boudet would be welcomed by the people of the island. He received letters from several citizens indicating their desire to have Boudet in command in Guadeloupe.\textsuperscript{24} By the middle of September 1802, Boudet prepared to return to the continent. Leclerc sent Boudet to explain to Bonaparte the situations that he faced.\textsuperscript{25}

Before Boudet arrived in France, Leclerc sent a letter to the First Consul indicating to him that he had “served perfectly at Saint-Domingue.”\textsuperscript{26} Boudet’s return to both

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 222-23.
\textsuperscript{21} Leclerc to himself, 17 February 1802, Ibid., 94.
\textsuperscript{22} Madiou, \textit{Histoire d’Haiti}, II, 259, 264-65
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., II, 266-68.
\textsuperscript{24} Leclerc to Lacrosse, 19 April 1802, Ibid., 128; Leclerc to Pelage, Hypolite Frasau, Enoix and Charles Cronelet, 19 April 1802, Ibid., 129.
\textsuperscript{25} Leclerc to Decrès, 26 September 1802, Ibid., 243.
\textsuperscript{26} Not all of Boudet’s exploits in the Caribbean in 1802 were of a solely military nature. While there, he discovered some secret documents of Toussaint Louverture from a double bottomed case. Leclerc to Bonaparte, 27 September 1802, Ibid., 251.
Guadeloupe and France probably saved his life because yellow fever claimed the majority of the expeditionary force on Saint-Domingue, including Leclerc.  

Boudet’s character suited him for an expedition to the islands. Several traits seemingly set him apart in this setting: loyalty, generosity, and a lack of prejudice to the men of color. He always looked after his men and for Boudet, social standing did not exist. Even the enemy saw good things in his character. Toussaint Louverture, having corresponded with Boudet, declared: “By the report from my nephew and then reading of the letter of General Boudet, I … recognize in him the … honesty and of frankness of a French officer, good for command.” Boudet later received recognition for his service in Saint-Domingue and Guadeloupe. On 14 June, the fifth anniversary of the Battle of Marengo, Napoleon I bestowed on him the rank of Commander of the Legion of Honor.  

When the Peace of Amiens collapsed and France was again at war with England, plans were made to strike at England. Napoleon decided to launch a full invasion of England with a strong expeditionary force. On 28 October 1803, Boudet was appointed to serve in the corps of Auguste Marmont, the general in chief for the entire force. He was stationed in Holland in the area of Utrecht with a force of 5,000 men. Despite lengthy preparations for the invasion, his force never left the mouth of the Texel River. Ultimately, this expedition was cancelled.

Boudet was then sent to join the 2nd Corps of the Army of Germany, fighting against the Third Coalition. Boudet was operating in Austria near Gratz. From the beginning of this campaign, he proved to be a good tactician, arranging his marches and maneuvers to coincide with the operations of the army. In 1805, the Battle of Austerlitz ended the campaign, but Boudet did not participate in the battle. The 2nd Corps of the army was sent south to the Italian city of Trieste, but his stay in this area was short.

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27 Pamphile de Lacroix in Leclerc, Ibid., 15. Most secondary literature focuses on the political and social aspects of Saint-Domingue. Little is actually written concerning the French military operations on the island. In general, the rebel forces fought well against the French, inflicting many losses on them. However, Leclerc’s expedition was not as disastrous military as it may seem. Boudet’s operations on Saint-Domingue are just one example of the French success against the rebel forces, but what really defeated the French army was the yellow fever.


29 Toussaint Louverture, Mémoires du Général Toussaint Louverture pouvant servir à l’histoire de sa vie (Port-au-Prince, 1986), 66.

30 Domy, Un Bordelais Méconnu, 14.

31 Ibid.
Prince Eugène de Beauharnais, aware of the administrative capabilities that he demonstrated in the Caribbean, ordered him to Verona to organize and command a new division. He remained at this post until 1806, when the division was deployed for combat.  

Boudet was named commandeered of the first division of the observation corps under Brune on 29 April 1807. He was sent to the siege of Colberg. His mission there was to blockade its garrison and ward off any partisans attacking the French convoys. The Peace of Tilsit in 1807 ended this campaign. However, Boudet moved on with his division into Swedish Pomerania to fight the Swedish who continued the war. On 13 July 1807, Boudet seized the fortress of Tresesse, then fought an enemy force of 4,000 men and six guns the next day near Stralsund. On 6 August, Boudet modified his attack and captured the town. Boudet’s actions in this campaign earned him the, cross of *Couronne de Fer*, the highest ranking award of the Kingdom of Italy. In addition, he received 30,000 francs in Swedish Pomeraina and the title of count of the Empire.

After Stralsund, Boudet joined Marshal Jean-Baptiste Jules Bernadotte and moved into Denmark where he remained until October 1807. Boudet soon became a favorite at the Danish court for his courtesy and disposition. On his departure, the king made him a Chevalier of the Order of Dannebrog. After Denmark, Boudet returned to France, and he was posted at Lyon until the beginning of the campaign in Germany in 1809.

Boudet’s isolation from Napoleon’s major campaigns was unfortunate, but determined by fate. He was a man of courage, who had the ability to inspire and lead his men. He also possessed other qualities that were aptly applied to the commands given to him. Boudet might have been better suited to command at Austerlitz and Jena, but he performed valuable services wherever he was given command. His loyalty to his country and to Napoleon allowed him to do his job well and without complaint.

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32 Ibid.
33 Six, *Dictionnaire*, 136.
34 Domy, *Un Bordelais Méconnu*, 16-17.
35 Ibid., 17.
CHAPTER FOUR: LEADER OF AN UNLIKELY FORTRESS: GENERAL JEAN BOUDET AT ESSSLING 1809

In 1809, the Hapsburg Empire once again went to war against Napoleon. Boudet was called to serve in the 4th Corps or the observation corps. He had been absent from major combat in Europe for eight years. During the campaign of 1809, he participated in the two major battles of Aspern-Essling and Wagram. In the first, the Battle of Aspern-Essling, Boudet’s lone division was forced to fight against the Austrians at great odds. However, Boudet’s leadership at Essling was impeccable. He truly led by example and it was his courage, bravery, and devotion to his troops that enabled the French to continue to hold this important position.

On 21 February, 1809 Emperor Napoleon I formed the 4th Corps of observation of the Army of the Rhine. This corps was comprised of the divisions of Claude-Juste-Alexandre Legrand, Claude Carra-Saint-Cyr, Boudet and Gabriel-Jean-Joseph Molitor, under the command of Marshal André Masséna, Duke of Rivoli. The divisions were united at Strasbourg. The division of Boudet included three infantry regiments. The 3rd Light and the 93rd Line were posted at Lyon and the 56th Line was from Chambéry. The strength of the division as recorded on 2 March, 1809 was nine total battalions with 7,171 active soldiers. According to General Henry-Jacques-Guillaume Clarke, Minister of War, the corps’ march began on the first couple of days of March so that they would arrive at Strasbourg about 23 March.

On 10 April, Boudet received an order from General of Division and Chief of Staff of the 4th corps Nicolas Bagert Beker to move from his headquarters at Ulm towards Landsberg. The next week the division would fall under the command of General Nicolas-Charles Oudinot and then Marshal Louis-Nicolas Davout. At this point,

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2 Clarke to Napoleon, Ibid., 99-100; Decree, 23 February, 1809, Ibid., 102.
3 Clarke to Napoleon, 2 March, 1809, Ibid., 105.
4 Clarke to Napoleon, Ibid., 100.
5 Beker to Boudet, 10 April 1809, Sasaki, Campagne de 1809, II, 103.
6 Berthier to Masséna, Henri Bonnal, La Manœuvre de Landshut (Paris, 1905), 170; Davout to Napoleon, 21 April 1809, Sasaki, Campagne de 1809, II, 305.
Boudet’s division served as the rear guard. In the following days, the division of Boudet moved through Bavaria to Ratisbone on the 24th, and finally on the 26th to Straubing where it would remain until the 28th. Boudet sent out reconnaissance while at Straubing; they indicated there was a strong Austrian presence at the town of Cham. In a letter from Davout to Boudet, information showed that the advance corps of division Boudet had been facing about 20,000 to 25,000 Austrian troops. Boudet received the order to leave Straubing on the 27th to reunite with Masséna at Passau. Boudet’s original target for the day’s march was Vilshofen, but Beker wrote Boudet telling him to march on the 29th to Scharding on the right bank to observe the Austrian movements between Scharding and Braunau. By 13 May, the movements of division Boudet had brought them just outside of the town of Léopoldstadt.

Napoleon hoped that the French capture of Vienna, the Hapsburg capital, on 13 May would have caused the Austrians to sue for peace. It did not. Napoleon then had another concern. He did not want the armies of Archduke Charles and Archduke Johann to link up. This was the main reason a battle was fought as soon as it was. If the two Austrians armies united, it would have been a dangerous combination.

The geography surrounding the battle of Aspern-Essling was complex. According the Bulletin of the Armée d’Allemagne, the Danube curved in branches that contained two islands. The larger of the two islands was called Lobau. A channel of the Danube separated it from the north bank and the villages of Aspern and Essling.

The French had to establish a series of bridges three miles in length for the passage across the Danube. The construction of the bridges was important. Napoleon had a special engineering force organized to build bridges; however, it had not arrived in time for this battle. There was only one set of bridges constructed for the passing of the French

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7 Bonnal, Manoeuvre de Landshut, 134.
8 Marches de la division Boudet (4e corps) d’Ingolstadt à Straubing (23 au 26 avril), Ibid., 307 ; Napoleon to Davout, 27 April 1809, Ibid., 324-25.
9 Davout to Boudet, 27 April 1809, Saski, Campagne de 1809, III, 47.
10 Boudet to Major General, Ibid., 59.
11 Bonnal, La Manoeuvre de Lanshut, 329 ; Beker to Boudet, Saski, Campagne de 1809, III, 59.
12 Beker, 13 May 1809, Saski, Campagne de 1809, III, 262.
14 Ibid., 108-09.
15 Correspondance of Napoleon I, 10th Bulletin of the Armée d’Allemagne, 23 May, 1809, No. 15246, XIX, 40.
forces. The Emperor had been warned of the dangers of this practice; first, the river was high and the current swift, and second, the Austrians could float various items down the river, slamming them into the bridges. On 19 May, the French erected a bridge from the right bank of the Danube to the smaller of the two islands. From there, another bridge was erected to connect it to the larger island of Lobau. Finally, on the 20th, a bridge was raised between Lobau and the north bank of the Danube. The same night, General Antoine Charles Louis Lassalle’s light cavalry and the divisions of Boudet and Molitor crossed onto the north shore. General Pierre Pelleport recalled that these troops, not to mention the artillery that went with them, did not pass very quickly. It took three hours to establish communication. The hastily erected bridges were poorly constructed. Yet these bridges would play an integral role throughout the battle for exactly this reason.

The night before the battle, Napoleon and a few of his marshals convened in a meeting on the island of Lobau concerning the Austrian position. There were several dissenting opinions. First, Lannes believed it was merely a rear guard consisting of about six to eight thousand men. Bessières, supporting the reports of this cavalry, asserted that the Austrians were still several leagues from them. Finally, Masséna argued that the Austrian Army was only a short distance away.

The Austrian Army had been heavily reinforced in all areas. The French estimated that it was about 90,000 to 100,000 men strong. On the 21st, the Austrian Army occupied Biasmberg, resting between the Danube and the Russbach Heights. According to chef de bataillon Pelet, Biasmberg was about three leagues from the French bridge and a little to the left. More specifically, the layout of the Austrian army was thus: Fieldmarshal Johan Freiherr Hiller on the heights of Stamersdorf; Cavalry General Heinrich Bellegarde at Gerasdorf; Fieldmarshal Franz Xavier Hohenzollern towards Süssenbrunn; and Prince Franz Rosemberg in the direction of Wagram. Hiller’s advance guard guarded the bridge at Spitz and the bank opposite of Nussdorf.

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16 Rothenberg, Emperor’s Last Victory, 113.
17 Ibid.
18 Pierre Pelleport, Souvenirs militaires et initimes du Général Vicomte de Pelleport (Paris, 1857), I, 266.
21 Ibid., III, 289-90.
The Austrians were completely aware that the French had crossed the Danube in force. In addition, the Danube was beginning to play its own role. The river rose during the course of the night. At 10:00 a.m., the Archduke Charles assembled his commanders to explain his attack plans. This plan consisted of five columns: three against Aspern and two towards Essling.\textsuperscript{22} The first three columns were Hiller, Bellegarde, and Hohenzollern respectively. The 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} columns were made up from the corps of Rosemberg, and the Austrian cavalry would move between the 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} columns.\textsuperscript{23} As a result, the Austrians formed a semi-circle around the French forces.\textsuperscript{24}

Napoleon was busy during this time. The French took up two general positions at Aspern and Essling, which created the essential front of the French lines. Aspern was the larger of the two towns and was situated in the west. Essling was to the east, and was dominated by a red brick granary that would serve as a fortress during the battle. There was about one mile between the two villages with a road and a bit of a depression in the terrain. This area lacked defensive strength. The French right wing at Essling was more exposed due to the open ground. The Muhlau salient was behind the two villages and had the single bridge where the French had crossed over. Defensive works were under way but by the time the battle had begun, they were no where near completion. By 1:00 p.m. three infantry divisions were on the mainland: Molitor, Legrand, and Boudet, linked by the cavalry forces of Antoine-Charles-Louis Lassalle and Jean-Louis-Brigitte Espagne.\textsuperscript{25} Pelet, aide-de-camp to Masséna remembered that on the morning of the 21\textsuperscript{st}, Napoléon said to Masséna that “my intention is to refuse the left, and to advance in fighting by the right.”\textsuperscript{26} The left was Aspern and the right was towards Essling where Lannes, along with Boudet was commanding his division.

\textsuperscript{23} Pelet, \textit{Mémoires sur la guerre de 1809}, III, 291.
\textsuperscript{24} Pelleport, \textit{Souvenirs militaires et intimes}, I, 267.
\textsuperscript{25} Petre, \textit{Napoleon and the Archduke Charles}, 277-78.
\textsuperscript{26} Pelet, \textit{Memoires sur la guerre de 1809}, III, 283.
Between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m., the first elements of the Austrian attack approached the French lines. Aspern would be reached first because the 4th and 5th columns of the Austrian army had a longer march towards Essling. The division of Molitor had not fully occupied Aspern when it first encountered the Austrian advance guard under the command of Armand von Nordmann who tried to enter Aspern from the southwest. However, in great bravery, the French were able to hold the Austrians back. Molitor
continued to battle them with his 37th and 67th regiments. At about 2:00 p.m. it was obvious to the French that the three large columns were fixed on Aspern. To complicate matters, Napoleon learned around this time of the rupture of the large bridge between Schneidergrund and Lobau. The Austrians began to float large objects down the swollen Danube and this practice proved extremely effective for them. Communications were hampered for hours. Meanwhile, the division of Molitor continued to fight against vastly superior forces and was eventually pushed out of the majority of the village. Reinforcements were not an immediate option for the overwhelmed division because division Legrand had to remain in reserve. During the course of the evening and the night, Apern switched hands six times.  

The critical point in Aspern was the church with this cemetery that served as the citadel for the town, much in the same way that the granary would in Essling. Masséna’s forces held this important point for the majority of the day of the 21st. Austrian fire was consistent, and they made many attempts to capture the area. Soon the combat inside Aspern evolved into a small scale urban warfare. The village had already been bombarded by Austrian bullets and artillery. Now the outnumbered French utilized all possible means of attack and defense including the church, walls, and the church tower both inside and outside.  

The area between Aspern and Essling presented a very vital area for cavalry action. Archduke Charles had placed some artillery there that harassed both Aspern and Essling. In response, Napoleon ordered Marshal Jean Baptiste Bessières to charge this artillery and the supporting troops with his cavalry. The light cavalry charged several times, but it was stopped short by Austrian fire. A second series of charges penetrated as far as the third Austrian line. The charges were made with a single division of cuirassiers initially under the command of General Espagne who would die here between the villages along with three of his colonels. The Austrian cavalry counterattacked, charging the French cavalry line. By 7:00 p.m. the brigade of Saint-Germain under the command of Étienne-Marie-Antoine Champion Nansouty, had arrived on the battlefield. Now with

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28 Ibid., III, 301.
reinforcements, Bessières resumed his attacks which held the Austrians charges in check.\textsuperscript{29}

Later in the afternoon, the first Austrian forces under the command of Rosenberg began to converge on Essling. Boudet’s single division was stiffly outnumbered by the Austrian columns. These two columns totaled nearly 22,000 troops and with almost fifty guns, including the reserve artillery. Boudet’s division only amounted to around 5,500, so the Austrians had roughly a 4 to 1 advantage.\textsuperscript{30} The village’s protection was entrusted to Marshal Jean Lannes with only Boudet’s division at his disposal. Lannes subordinates were Generals Boudet, and his generals of brigade François Nicolas Friron and Guy-Louis-Henri Valory. The three infantry regiments available were the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Light, 56\textsuperscript{th} Line and the 93\textsuperscript{rd} Line. The general layout of the town was from the east to the west with only one street and a small dyke surrounding it.\textsuperscript{31} The 56\textsuperscript{th} was positioned around the houses in Essling, and a company was in the granary. Some men were also guarding the cemetery and about 150 were placed at Stadt Enzersdorf. Boudet’s artillery, 12 canon and 2 mortars, was behind the safety of a barrier protecting the right of Fririon’s brigade, which was behind a ditch running parallel to the Vienna road.\textsuperscript{32}

Two Austrian battalions of Johann de Chasteller’s 5\textsuperscript{th} column attacked from the front of the village while two more from the regiment of Henrich Bellegarde’s column came from the right. The two of Bellegarde were supported by the hussars of Archduke Ferdinand d’Este and Stipsicz along with two divisions of Rosenberg’s light cavalry.\textsuperscript{33} Masséna wrote of the response of the French troops at Essling: “Our troops, encouraged by the example of the duc de Montebello and General Boudet, supported with determination these attacks and pushed back the Austrians several times with a heavy fire.”\textsuperscript{34} The Austrians never seemed to finish their attacks at Essling. Louis François Lejeune provided a vivid description of the battle of Essling:

When the news reached us that our bridge was broken, the wind was blowing the masses of smoke rising up from Aspern towards us, wrapping us in a black cloud,
whilst the blood-red sun shed its lurid light upon the scene. Hitherto, as I have already said, we have been able to repulse the charges of the enemy’s light cavalry, and had even driven off sixty pieces of canon which had been pouring such a murderous fire upon us, but now we were forced to wait till our communications were reopened before we could continued to act on the defensive. This enabled the enemy to rally. The archduke again attacked the village of Essling.\textsuperscript{35}

The Austrians attempted to take Essling three times in the course of the evening and the night. Three times they were repulsed. The Austrians did, however, succeed in destroying the village of Essling with their artillery, setting many of the homes on fire.\textsuperscript{36} Lejeune commented on the accuracy of the Austrian artillery fire at Essling: “We owe many thanks to the Austrian gunners, for, whether from nervousness or awkwardness or in haste, they certainly aimed very badly.”\textsuperscript{37} The most probable explanation for the Austrian destruction at Essling is that the Austrians were trying to hit the French positions and when they failed, they struck the homes, setting them ablaze.

Night did not end the hostilities surrounding Aspern. Archduke Charles ordered Hiller and Bellegarde, one final time, to take the town no matter the cost. General Hohenzollern attacked from the right. Aspern was now occupied, at least partly, by the Austrians who pounded the French with their fire. Masséna countered with a cannonade and pushed forward with Legrand leading the 26\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} regiments. The division of Legrand relieved Molitor since he had lost over half of its men. The Austrians now had seized control over the two most critical points in Aspern: the cemetery and the church. This did not completely end the firing on the night of the 21\textsuperscript{st} at Aspern, but the Archduke did rest his forces just a little to the rear.\textsuperscript{38}

The first day of confrontations at Aspern and Essling had come to an end. The Austrians despite all their efforts and a nearly three to one advantage in manpower could not break through the French lines. Despite the crisis at the bridges, Napoleon was able to

\textsuperscript{35} Louis François Lejeune, \textit{Memoirs of Baron Lejeune, aide-de-camp to Marshals Berthier, Davout, and Oudinot} (London, 1897), I, 271-72. It is difficult to ascertain a timetable on the breaking of the bridge. The French had reoccurring problems throughout the battle of Aspern-Essling to keep the bridges in operation. For more on this, Lejeune’s \textit{Memoirs} provides an excellent account of the French struggles with their bridges during the battle. His account of the battle itself is also quite good.

\textsuperscript{36} Pelet, \textit{Mémoires sur la guerre de 1809}, III, 303.

\textsuperscript{37} Lejeune, \textit{Memoirs of Baron Lejeune}, I, 272.

\textsuperscript{38} Pelet, \textit{Mémoires sur la guerre de 1809}, III, 304.
get some reinforcements over during the night. Initially, the divisions of Molitor (6,200 men), Boudet (5,300 men), Espagne (2,550 men), Lassalle (2,380 men), and Marulaz (1400 men) were on the battlefield at the onset of aggressions. This totaled approximately 11,500 infantry and 6,330 cavalry. By 6:00 p.m. Carra-Saint-Cyr’s division accounted for another 10,900 men. In another hour, an addition 1,500 men arrived. This was a critical time for Napoleon to prepare for the next day. Around 2:00 a.m. the divisions of Oudinot and Saint-Hilaire of Lannes’ corps, some escadrons of Nansouty, parts of the young guard and some artillery passed across the Danube. These passages were also a laborious process. By 3:00 a.m. the right flank of the French line at Essling, looking right to left included the division of Boudet, Saint-Hilaire, Oudinot, and Claparède. Theses forces were under the command of Lannes. On the left flank at Aspern, the divisions of Legrand, Molitor, and Carra-Saint-Cyr were deployed directly under the command of Masséna. The Imperial Guard was concentrated to serve as a reserve. 39

Besides the troops passing the bridges during the night, the forces at Essling worked diligently at creating a strong defensible position. They made use of whatever was available in the village. Some grenadiers were placed to guard the rentrenchment that ran south of the cemetery and towards the road of Gross Enzersdorf. Three shelters were erected in front of the granary. Canons were positioned there. Carts, mattresses, and anything that would provide cover were used in building the defenses at Essling. The best marksmen were up in the loft at the top of the granary. 40 Boudet announced to his troops, “Essling will be our inexpugnable fortress.” 41

39 Pelet, Mémoires sur la guerre de 1809, III, 305-06; Pelleport, Souvenirs militaires et initimes, I, 268-69; Gill, With Eagles to Glory, 41.
40 Gachot, Napoleon en Allemagne, 181.
41 Boudet in Gachot, Ibid.
Napoleon ordered an attack on the Austrian center, headed by Lannes with support from Masséna and Boudet. The latter two were to hold their respective positions and then attack at the opportune moment. Lannes’ attack was planned to pierce the Austrians between the two villages and push their forces back with one towards Hungary and the other side towards Bohemia. Once Davout arrived, he was ordered to move to Essling. By 7:00 a.m., the French were ready to implement the attack. The French
divisions were deployed with: Saint-Hilaire, Tharreau, and Claparède in the first line, and the second line was formed by cavalry. Boudet remained at Essling.\textsuperscript{42}

Spearheaded by the division of Saint-Hilaire, \textit{chef de bataillon} Pelet describes the initial attack where “the terrible 57\textsuperscript{th} flew and hit like lightning; the other regiments want to equal it. Nothing could withstand them; and the enemy retired in front of them.”\textsuperscript{43} The movement was a success and the troops continued to press on. The Austrian center was beginning to collapse. Some Austrians were retreating towards Esslinghof and others toward Breitenlée. Archduke Charles believed the entire French army had crossed the Danube, which was not true. The Archduke then moved to the center of his line to inspire his troops and close gaps. Austrian grenadiers were sent as reinforcement to Rosemberg. Hohenzollern and Bellegarde’s corps were both spread out more. Both armies fought valiantly for their leaders. The French continued their advance now supported by Masséna’s forces and the Young Guard while Boudet was still fighting Rosemberg’s corps at Essling.\textsuperscript{44}

Despite these great advances made by the French army during the morning, Napoleon received the disastrous news about the condition of his bridges about 8:00 a.m. The previous day, the breaking of the bridges was a serious inconvenience, but on the morning of 22 May, the bridges were not so easily repairable. The Austrians floated boats and mills down the already turbulent river, and they struck, destroying large sections of the bridges. A lack of ammunition was also a major concern. With both of these in mind, Napoleon sent word to Lannes to halt the offensive. The Austrians were perplexed by the French halt, but they were more so inspired by it.\textsuperscript{45}

Napoleon had to give up on any chance that the bridges could be repaired and also on the opportunity to send future reinforcements from the forces of Marshal Davout. The Austrian attack began again on both French flanks. Lannes was ordered to hold his ground against an Austrian army still far superior in number to the French. While the Austrians proceeded to attack again, Masséna seized the offensive in Aspern. He captured the first houses, but the Austrians again retook them later. Admittedly, the Austrians were

\textsuperscript{43} Pelet, \textit{Mémoires sur la guerre de 1809}, III, 314.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 314-318.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 318-19.
at a great advantage in Aspern. In addition to their superiority in sheer numbers, they also had control of the church and more artillery on the western side of the town. However, the French would not cede Aspern without a valiant effort. The town passed back and forth between the French and the Austrians throughout the day. The town of Aspern had become a site of carnage and destruction. The French were forced to maneuver around and over the dead. The Austrians launched projectiles into the houses that scattered debris on them from above. 46

Towards midday, the Austrians resolved to try to capture Aspern from the west. Masséna moved some of Molitor’s battalions forward. Molitor repulsed the Austrians west of Aspern. Legrand’s division, consisting of the 26th and 18th regiments, also pushed the Austrians back. 47 The fighting continued at Aspern as it had the previous day. However, during the morning at Essling, the combat doubled or tripled its intensity. 48

By 11:00 a.m., Archduke Charles ordered Rosenberg and Dedovich to take Essling. This attack like others before it, as Masséna recounted, failed “thanks to the energetic resistance of Boudet, the Austrians withdrew again and did not easily regain their first position.” 49 Meanwhile, Archduke Charles sent the Field Marshal Karl d’Aspre to support Rosenberg and to attack with four battalions of grenadiers. Part of division Boudet, the brigade of Fririon, was spread out towards the left in order to connect his forces with Lannes’ corps. The French thus held the western part of the village.
Hungarian grenadiers attacked the French forces five times, but each time they were repulsed. Eventually, though Boudet offered stiff resistance, his forces moved into the village granary where they continued to resist the Austrians. 50

With the French forces on the defensive, the Austrians prepared to destroy the bulk of the French army. The Austrians launched an attack in the area between Aspern and Essling. In other words, to separate the forces of Masséna and Lannes. An attack of this sort also threatened any chance of escape for the French. The Austrians made a fatal error here in delaying an all out attack including reserves. Napoleon was not ignorant to the danger at hand. He moved all available troops to this area to help repulse another

46 Ibid., 320, 322-23.
49 Masséna, Mémoires, VI, 252.
50 Pelet, Mémoires sur la guerre de 1809,III, 325.
offensive by the Austrians. Already exhausted troops were positioned towards the flanks of the Austrians while Bessières was to charge with his cavalry. All of this was not intended to break the Austrian army, but to save the French one.\textsuperscript{51}

The Austrians launched a cavalry attack between Lannes and Essling. Some French light cavalry opposed them. The Austrians broke through to the second line consisting of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Light and the 93\textsuperscript{rd} Line of the division of Boudet. Fririon, in command, ordered them not to fire at point blank range. Archduke Charles, without further success, gave up his efforts on breaking the middle of the French forces. Instead, the Austrians sent reinforcements against Essling with all intentions of taking the village. The exhausted soldiers of Boudet were overwhelmed. By 3:00 p.m. the bulk of Boudet’s division evacuated Essling. However, General Boudet remained with a few hundred of his men in the village granary, a red brick building almost a hundred yards long and fifty feet high with walls five feet thick.\textsuperscript{52}

Although Boudet’s division evacuated Essling, the village was still vital to the French. So Napoleon sent General of Division Georges Mouton, commander of the Young Guard and aide-de-camp to the Emperor, to attack the Austrians around Essling. Mouton had four battalions of fusiliers against the Archduke Charles’ Hungarian grenadiers. The actual objective of this attack was to relieve pressure on the retreating French forces and provide for an orderly withdrawal. Mouton’s attack was very successful; he exceeded his prescribed goal by ousting the Austrians from Essling.\textsuperscript{53} The fighting continued in both Aspern and Essling in the afternoon until Napoleon realized that the battle was lost. That evening, Masséna was ordered to withdraw the army to the island of Lobau, ending the blood battle of Aspern-Essling.

At Essling Boudet’s isolated division resisted the Austrian attacks for almost two days. Boudet’s leadership ability again shined despite the final outcome of the battle. The Austrians with their vastly superior numbers eventually seized Essling regardless of casualties to the French or to themselves. Yet, the granary of the village was instrumental in enabling the division to hold Essling until reinforcements arrived. Ultimately, the Austrians never gained control of Essling.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 326.
\textsuperscript{52} Pelet, \textit{Mémoires sur la guerre de 1809}, III, 328; Rothenberg, \textit{Napoleon's Last Victory}, 124-25.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., III, 329; Gill, \textit{With Eagles to Glory}, 43.
When the majority of Boudet’s division evacuated Essling, Boudet did not leave with the rest of the division. He remained entrenched in the granary with only a few hundred troops. His presence in the granary was a significant reflection of his courage and devotion to his troops. His example encouraged the remaining troops to fight on. If he would have left them, it could have had a detrimental effect on the morale of his command.

Essling was perhaps the most glorious moment in Boudet’s career. Unlike all his other battles, he did not have the luxury of reserves, cavalry aid, and the only artillery he had was his own. In addition, he faced overwhelming numbers. They were able to hold their part of the French line to avoid the Austrians being able to fully occupy a vital position and did not allow the Austrians the possibility to turn on the rest of the French forces that fought on the right bank of the Danube.
CHAPTER FIVE: INSURMOUNTABLE ODDS: WAGRAM

About six weeks after Aspern-Essling came the Battle of Wagram. Boudet again participated in this deciding action and French victory. However, Boudet’s conduct at the battle has been criticized namely for his inability to defend against an Austrian attack against the French left. Yet considering the circumstances, Boudet’s actions did not cost the French their victory, and the evidence against Boudet seems unfounded.¹

After the defeat at Aspern-Essling, Boudet and his division remained on the Island of Lobau to recover from the losses suffered there. Napoleon decided to cross the river again and confront Archduke Charles. On the night of 4 July, the army crossed the Danube and occupied the area north of the river opposite the Austrian army. On the night of 5 July, the division of Boudet with the three other divisions in the 4th Corps covered a large area on the left side of the French army.² About 2:00 a.m., Masséna was ordered to march on Aderklaa with three divisions from his corps (Legrand, Carra Saint-Cyr, and Molitor). At the same time, Boudet was sent to guard Aspern and the bridges to the island of Lobau.³ This order completely isolated Boudet and left his single division to cover the entire area once guarded by four divisions.

Boudet’s report indicated that they first sighted the Austrian lines about 5:00 a.m. around Gross-Aspern. An hour later, their advance posts were under attack. The 93rd Line guarded Aspern using the cemetery as cover while the 56th Line was a little forward of the village protecting the artillery that Boudet said was placed for an easy withdrawl if necessary.⁴ The 3rd Light Infantry was located on the right flank of Aspern blocking the road from Essling.⁵ From Boudet’s report, the estimated strength of the Austrian forces was 25,000 men.⁶

¹ For more information on the battle of Wagram, there are some excellent primary and secondary sources available. The best primary sources are Pelet, Mémoires sur la guerre de 1809 volume four and Masséna’s Mémoires volume six. The most recent secondary source is Gunter Rothenberg’s The Emperor’s Last Victory (London, 2004).
² Pelet, Mémoires sur la guerre de 1809, IV, 195.
³ Ibid., 198.
⁵ André Masséna, Mémoires, VI, 313; Gachot, Napoleon en Allemagne, 267.
Figure 10: Battle of Wagram 6 July
From Gill, With Eagles to Glory, 53.

The Austrian canon was directed on French artillery with a cannonade that began about 7:00 a.m.\textsuperscript{7} A diversionary attack against Aspern by the Austrian battalion of Saint-Georges preceded the main attack directed against Boudet’s right.\textsuperscript{8} Johan Graf Klenau’s IV corps, in battalion columns, had cavalry support on both their flanks. By 8:00 a.m. the main attack began down the Kagran-Aspern road. Boudet sent a battery forward to impede the Austrian advance.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid. ; Masséna, Mémoires, VI, 313.
\textsuperscript{8} Masséna, Mémoires, VI, 313.
\textsuperscript{9} Rothenberg, Emperor’s Last Victory, 181.
After an hour of hard fighting, Boudet’s division was incurring heavy casualties. Half of the officers and even some of the servants were in combat against the Austrians. Many horses had also been lost. Boudet’s cavalry had been sent off with Masséna earlier in the day.  

With many of his officers injured from the fighting, Boudet personally made a reconnaissance to better grasp the situation. He noticed that his artillery was too far to the right so he took steps to correct the problem, but time and numbers were not on his side.  

Boudet’s guns were captured by Ludwig Graf von Wallmoden’s light cavalry, and supported by Liechtenstein and Michael von Keinmayer’s Hussars. These charges proved too much for the division of Boudet, who did manage to reclaim their artillery but without any cavalry, the Austrians had little trouble taking it back. Despite the valiant efforts of all of Boudet’s division, he was forced to fall back to the bridgehead or risk the complete destruction of his division. The 93rd Line tried to hold Aspern as the Austrians advanced into the town, by using the cemetery wall as protection. The 3rd Light Infantry also tried in vain to stop the Austrian advance towards Essling but they too had to retreat.  

By 10:00 a.m. the Austrians were in a position where they could strike the rear of the French army or the bridges that division Boudet tried to protect. Klenau paused because his orders did not order him farther and because his forces came under bombardment from General Jean-Louis Ebénézer Reynier’s guns positioned on Lobau that covered Boudet’s division once it came into range to do so.  

There were several issues concerning what happened in the morning hours of 6 July that require addressing. The first issue is exactly number of forces for both Austrian and French. On the Austrian side, Klenau’s VI corps contained almost 14,000 men and sixty-four guns. Contrary to this statement, Boudet’s report stated that there were 25,000 men. The most feasible explanation was that Boudet occupied a vantage point

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14 Ibid., 182.  
where he could not only see the marching columns of Klenau, but also those of Kollowrat, immediately to the left. Kollowrat had roughly the same number of men as Klenau’s corps.  

It seemed obvious that Boudet was too weak to be able to complete his assignment; that was to guard the left side of the French army from Hirschstetten to Gross Aspern and the bridges at Lobau. It has never been disputed that Boudet faced far superior forces than he had. At Wagram, his division only totaled about 3,725 men and approximately two batteries. Compared to the size of his force at Aspern-Essling, Boudet had lost nearly 2,000 men from his previous strength, so the Austrians might have had a four to one advantage over Boudet in the battle.

Another criticism of Boudet’s command came from chef de bataillon Pelet. He asserted that Boudet did not take advantage of the topography but positioned his troops on the plain. There are several problems with this presumption since Boudet made extensive use of his largest unit in the 56th Line to defend the very strong defensive position at Aspern-Essling. Boudet used the cemetery again to provide cover for his troops. Moreover, most of the terrain in the area was a plain. Other than Aspern proper, there was little defensible area available.

The movement of Boudet’s artillery towards the right was also an area worth investigating. Boudet stated explicitly in his report that the artillery was moved towards the right without his orders. His report was the only record that indicated a source for the failure of the artillery. Since the report was directed to Napoleon, it can be assumed that Boudet’s report was a credible source of information.

The source of the failure of Boudet’s division can be traced back to one person -- Napoleon. Boudet’s failure was due to the fact that he was outnumbered. Without necessary support, his single division could not defeat an entire Austrian corps that was well supported just to its left. Napoleon, gave Boudet a task that there was unachievable, opening up the French left flank and thereafter the French rear for direct Austrian attack. It also threatened the bridges and retreat route for the entire French army.

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16 Bowden and Tarbox, *Armies on the Danube*, 204-05.
18 Bowden and Tarbox, *Armies on the Danube*, 189, 112.
An aide-de-camp of Masséna went to Napoleon to inform him of Boudet’s disposition. Pelet recounted this meeting:

_The canon which is there, behind us, said the officer, is the one of the Austrians._ The Emperor did not respond. _The division Boudet was pushed back in the island of Lobau; it lost its canons._ Same silence. At this instant, he perceived the fire of Davout to overtake the turn of Neusiedel. Napoleon turned towards the aide de camp: _Run to say to Masséna that he [is to] attack, and that the battle is won on all points._

From this account, Napoleon did not seem alarmed by the news brought to him. Davout’s success towards Neusiedel was a harbinger not only of the French victory, but that Davout’s forces were the most vital in the mind of the Emperor to achieve victory.

Napoleon did take measures to halt the advance of the Austrian right wing against French positions at Lobau. He sent Masséna on a flank march towards Essling to cut off the Austrians. The division of Boudet, though having fallen back to the bridgehead, rejoined the battle to repulse the Austrians. United with Legrand, they moved from the Danube to the road towards Vienna. Finally, Boudet’s division was able to reclaim Aspern.

After the battle, Masséna sent a letter to Napoleon informing him of Boudet’s distinguished conduct and said “General Boudet carries great courage until the boldness; he never knew anything of impossible.” Boudet received yet another honor from Napoleon in his new rank as Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor. When the award was made, the Emperor said to him, “General you have saved my army.”

Wagram was the final battle of Boudet’s life. Soon, Boudet began to suffer the pain from gout to the head and to the legs. Doctors urged him to return home to his estate to rest. However, despite the excellent advice he was given, he refused to leave his men. He said, “Never will I rest as my soldiers fight the enemy.” On the night of 13 September 1809, Boudet’s health deteriorated dramatically. Once he realized his condition, Boudet dictated a letter to his wife, informing her of his death. He wished her

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21 Pelet, _Mémoires sur la guerre de 1809_, IV, 221.
22 Ibid., IV, 231.
23 Gachot, _Napoleon en Allemagne_, 272.
24 Masséna, in Domy, _Un Bordelais Méconnu_, 20.
25 Napoleon, in Ibid.
26 Boudet, in Ibid.
to know that “his last sigh had been for her, for my country, and for the Emperor.”\textsuperscript{27} These words were eerily similar to those spoken by Napoleon years later at St. Helena. Finally, he turned to his officer who were surrounding him and said to them, “My friends, be more fortunate, than me, die on the field of honor.”\textsuperscript{28} He died at 7:00 p.m. on 14 September 1809 at the age of forty-one.\textsuperscript{29}

Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne in his \textit{Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte} stated that Boudet was on good terms with the Emperor and that he was affected by his death. The only words that Napoleon used in reference to his death were “Who the devil shall I get to supply Boudet’s place?”\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Louis Antoine Fauvelet de Bourrienne, \textit{Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte} (Paris and Boston, 1895), II, 11.
CONCLUSION

Boudet’s early and unfortunate death, coupled with the relative obscurity of his command for the seven years prior to the campaign in Germany in 1809, probably had the most profound impact on his career advancement. Boudet never conducted his own corps in battle, even though other generals of division like Vandamme did.

Throughout his life, Boudet displayed various talents on and off the battlefield that suited him well for higher command than he ever received. One of the most defining characteristics was his belief that nothing was impossible. He displayed this characteristic beginning with his campaigns back in Guadeloupe in the mid-1790s, ending with his final campaign in 1809 when he attacked an entire Austrian corps with his lone division. His leadership capabilities and the capacity to inspire his men proved valuable assets at Marengo, Saint-Domingue and Essling.

Boudet’s devotion to his men and congenial disposition made him well liked by both the men when he commanded and those who commanded him. Always at the head of his troops when going into battle, Boudet gave little regard for his own safety. His accolades are many from tactical to administrative, but the fact remains that they were unappreciated by Napoleon and ignored by his peers. He was awarded various medals and words of praise for his accomplishments. On the surface, those attributes said a lot about his career. By 1809, Boudet had been a general of division for thirteen years.

Boudet accomplishments have been masked by those who attributed his achievements or contributions to the dead. For example, at Marengo, Desaix’s name was recognized although the success was due to Boudet’s division at Marengo. The same is true at Essling when a dead Lannes’ name was recognized for Boudet’s efforts there. Consequently, Boudet’s efforts and achievements seem to have been attributed to others despite his vital role in achieving victory in these battles.

Many questions surrounding Boudet’s life still remain. On a whole, many of the campaigns that Boudet was involved in warrant more investigation. His campaign in Holland in 1799, both expeditions to the Caribbean, his creation of the new division and his operations and activities in 1807-08 are all very elusive. Much is known about the Battle of Aspern-Essling, however, the actual defense of Essling by Boudet has been
minimized. Finally, Boudet’s death is still a matter of debate. Some say that he committed suicide from Napoleon’s reproaches after Wagram while others have argued that it was a case of gout.

Boudet deserved a better fate than he received then and now. His obvious talents, exhibited through limited means and exposure warrant a reexamination of his career. He served France and his Emperor loyally throughout his life and played a crucial role in achieving victory at Marengo and saving the army at Aspern-Essling. He deserved a better fate. It is hoped that this study will contribute in some small measure to restoring the reputation and acknowledge the achievements of a remarkable soldier who lived and died as a true hero of his country.

Figure 11 : General of Division Jean Boudet
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**Secondary Sources:**


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Monica Fouché received her bachelor’s degree from Auburn University in 2003 with a major in history. Her continual passion and interest in military history and the Napoleonic period brought her to Florida State University under the direction of Dr. Donald Horward. This thesis was completed in the summer of 2005.