

There were also more layers to Napoleon's stratagem if we continue on. For instance, by amassing his forces at Geneva, he could debouch in three directions. Either head to Basel and Lower Germany so as to directly support Moreau, head through Switzerland, invading the Vorarlberg and Tyrol so as to threaten the heartland of Austria itself and outflanking the strategic rear of Kray and Melas, or to debouch through the Alps into Italy. These various options he could take made it more difficult for the Allies to ascertain his actual intentions.

Furthermore, he made Berthier commander of the Army of the Reserve, so as to make his enemies believe that it was his chief-of-staff leading, when in actuality, he was the de facto general in charge of the upcoming operations. When he finally invaded Italy, we must also look at the various dispositions of forces. Between the mountains and the coast lay Suchet's corps demonstrating against Nice. Turreau commanded a small brigade to demonstrate through the Mt. Cenis Pass at Susa, between the St. Bernard and the coast. Meanwhile, a bit east of the St. Bernard, Moncey's corps threatened a crossing of the St. Gotthard Pass.

Therefore, the Austrian observation forces primarily concentrated their forces opposite these threats, exposing their strategic center along the St. Bernard Pass to Napoleon's main army,

which debouched down that route, smashed through Haddick's column, and sent both Haddick and Vukassovich (guarding the St. Bernard and St. Gotthard routes) scurrying back across the north bank of the Po River, past the rivers Ticino, Adda, and Oglio, whereupon they drew up new defensive lines behind the Mincio River. In this manner, he had basically cut Melas' entire army in half. Napoleon is sometimes criticized for not directly moving to Massena's aid, but by this manoeuvre, he had severed Melas' communications and all of the demonstration forces could begin concentrating around the Austrian feldmarschall to encircle him.

In short, the Marengo operations was the proto-Ulm, except while he outnumbered Mack in 1805, it was in 1800 that Napoleon cut up a *numerically superior army* and *encircled it*. There was definitely some risk attended to by these operations, as to maintain the encirclement, he did blunder a bit in spreading his forces on a wide cordon due to his inferior numbers. He had actually requested Moreau to send a corps south to support his operations in Italy, but that general dithered until it was too late and the reinforcements never truly made it to help him. Perhaps, if he had an extra corps earlier, the risks he took at Marengo would not have led to such a close call.

However, in the end, the reality was that he *did* defeat Melas. Desaix deserves as much credit as Blucher at Waterloo for reaching the field at Marengo in a timely manner, but Napoleon's plan was always to discover Melas, intercept him, then concentrate and destroy his army. Whereas Wellington and Blucher operated on a joint-Allied strategy in the Waterloo operations, it was Napoleon alone who concocted the strategy for Italy. He emerged victorious despite having an inferiority in quality and quantity. The Austrians were also veterans who had fought under Suvorov and Melas both; the French were low on supplies overall due to the lackluster logistical apparatus of the old Directoire (something Napoleon and Berthier would fix by 1805) and ran out of ammunition early that battle; and they were outnumbered, ridiculously so in terms of artillery.

In truth, the victory of Marengo paved the way for the encirclement of Melas' army. The French did take 4,700 killed & wounded, plus 900 captured at the pivotal battle itself, as well as another 1,000 killed & wounded in operations elsewhere as Suchet pressed forward and captured the places abandoned by Melas as the latter concentrated to take on Napoleon. There were also 3,000 killed & wounded at Montebello. Melas personally lost 6,000 killed & wounded, plus 8,000 captured at the primary battle. However, he also lost another 2,000 killed & wounded, plus 8,000 captured to Suchet's advance on his western flank as part of Napoleon's grand encirclement. At Montebello, he took around 2,100 killed & wounded, plus 2,200 captured. Therefore, for only 8,700 killed & wounded, plus 900 captured this campaign, Napoleon had dealt upon Melas as many as 10,100 killed & wounded, plus 18,200 captured.

Also, as a whole, before the battle, but after Piacenza had been taken and most of Melas' army cut off from their communications, the number of Austrians encircled by Napoleon amounted to nearly 64,000 men (Melas' primary observation forces along the coast, Ott's Genoa siege force, and Kaim's column south of the Po, plus small detachments and garrisons). Melas has often been criticized for accepting the Convention of Alessandria, but honestly, Napoleon gave him

the most generous terms in letting him vacate Northwestern Italy with his forces (likely because he couldn't afford to feed tens of thousands of prisoners with France still in a poor state). Yet, in truth, this victory was more brilliant than Ulm and redounded greatly to Napoleon's credit, for not only did he encircle an army larger (especially in artillery and cavalry) than his own and essentially neutralized it, he defeated a competent commander in the form of Melas.

Some would point to Moreau's feat at Hohenlinden and say that was the greater victory, but he was given the choicest pick of France's best veterans and the larger army to work with, as well as the greater logistical support. His opponents (Kray and Johann) were also lesser than Melas. He made far more blunders in his operations leading up to that final victory (though, he still did rather well, all things considered), and his attitude towards delaying sending Napoleon reinforcements potentially costed the First Consul a safer victory at Marengo. Nevertheless, if the Convention of Alessandria did not happen, but Napoleon had the logistical means to capture the near 64,000 Austrians which he had encircled, we would be speaking of the 2nd Italian Campaign as a feat far surpassing Hohenlinden in not only *how* it was achieved, but also the results.