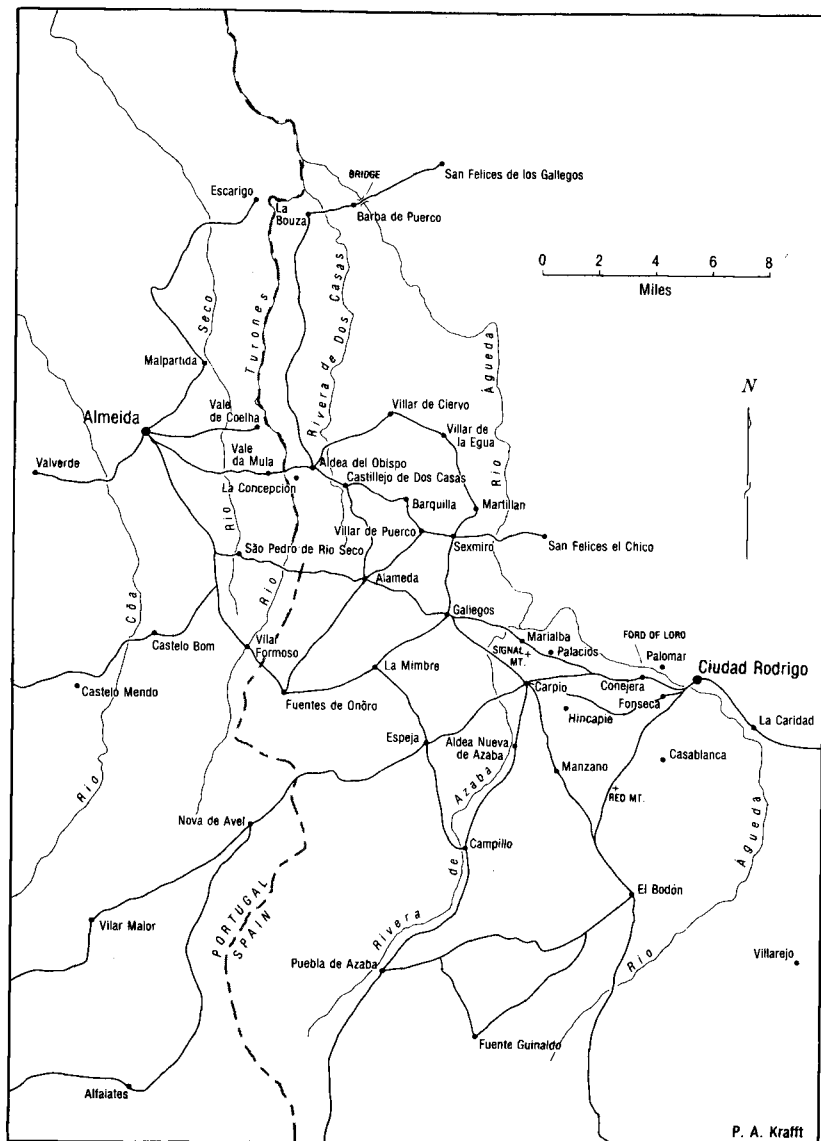


**THE BRITISH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF PORTUGAL**

**TWENTY FIRST ANNUAL REPORT
AND REVIEW 1994**

13, Rua da Arriaga
1200 LISBON
Tel: 397 86 03



Area between Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida

MARSHAL ANDRÉ MASSÉNA AND THE SIEGE OF CIUDAD RODRIGO¹

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As the armies of Napoleon extended French domination across Europe, the name of Ciudad Rodrigo was catapulted onto the pages of history along with such villages as Rivoli, Austerlitz, Jena, Eylau, and Wagram. Although events occurring at Ciudad Rodrigo were less spectacular, the results of the siege there had a major impact upon the Third Invasion of Portugal which, in turn, had a monumental effect upon the Peninsular War and the ultimate collapse of the Napoleonic Empire.

Marshal André Masséna knew little or nothing of Ciudad Rodrigo as he led the victorious armies of France across Europe from the tip of Italy to the banks of the Vistula. Upon his return from the Austrian campaign in 1809 as the Prince d'Essling, Masséna's martial achievements were second only to those of Napoleon. His brilliant accomplishments during Napoleon's First Italian Campaign, the crowning success of his career at the battle of Zurich, the punishing siege of Genoa, the conquest of Naples, the defense of Poland, and his tenacious struggle at Aspern-Essling and Wagram had earned him the accolades of his countrymen. Awards, titles, and personal recognition by Napoleon were reassuring, but after Wagram, he looked forward to an extended furlough at his Chateau of Rueil to recuperate from the rigors of the campaign. Yet, within six months he was named to a new command that ultimately cast shadows on his great military career.

In the spring of 1810 rumors circulated that Masséna would be appointed to command the prestigious army of observation in Germany but he regarded such gossip with indifference. Indeed, he was still recovering from a painful fall and a severe respiratory malady and had little interest in any command that might tax his deteriorating health. Without regard for his infirmities, however,

¹ Notes can be found at the end of the article.

Napoleon's chief of staff, Alexander Berthier, informed him that he would assume command of the Army of Portugal, created by an Imperial Decree on 17 April 1810. With this army, composed of the 2nd, 6th, and 8th Corps of the Army of Spain, Masséna was expected to seize the fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, invade Portugal, drive Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese army into the sea, and end resistance in the Peninsula.²

For two years the Spanish armies had continued their struggle in the occupied province against the French. Their field armies had been temporarily vanquished, only to reappear, ready to contest further French expansion. The heroic resistance of the Spanish cities, as exemplified by the sieges of Saragossa and Gerona, had delayed Napoleon's schedule of conquest and inflicted appalling losses upon the French. The irregular guerrilla forces had transformed the peaceful countryside into a living hell for the Imperial troops. Consequently, several hundred thousand soldiers were sent to pacify Spain, but their control was limited primarily to the urban areas and the territory actually occupied by their troops. Tens of thousands of Frenchmen died each year and the reputations of many generals and several marshals were tarnished in the Spanish quagmire which continued without foreseeable end.

At the same time, the Portuguese had demonstrated an alterable determination to resist the French. With Wellington's leadership and Britain's financial support, the Portuguese had transformed their country into a sanctuary, a base of operation, and finally a battleground for the Allied army. Convinced that as long as his forces remained in Portugal, "the contest must continue in Spain," Wellington methodically mobilized Lusitania and incited its citizens to resist the French at all costs. Their ultimate efforts centered on the activation of the *ordenanza*, the "scorched earth policy," and the construction of the vital Lines of Torres Vedras to defend Lisbon and assure the safety of the Allied army.³

Masséna knew few details of the operations in the Peninsula before his appointment but he was aware of the general problems faced by the armies of France. As a result, when Berthier announced Napoleon's intentions to place him in command of the Army of Portugal, Masséna expressed grave misgivings about the assignment, his resources, and his subordinates. When Napoleon learned of these reservations, he invited Masséna to meet with him. Their interview became a stormy session in which Masséna was alternately badgered and flattered into reluctantly accepting the assignment, with the assurance that he would "lack nothing"--a promise that Napoleon conveniently forgot.⁴

On 26 April, Masséna left the comforts of Rueil, boarded his calash, and set out on what proved to be his last campaign. Crossing the Bidassoa River into Spain, Masséna's entourage reached his new headquarters at Valladolid on 10

May 1810. Taking up residence in the magnificent old palace of Charles V, he was greeted by General Andoche Junot and his wife the Duchesse d'Abrantès, as well as the other senior commanders of the army. Marshal Michel Ney, however, remained at Salamanca supervising the deployment of his corps.⁵

Ney had been ordered to besiege Ciudad Rodrigo as early as January 1810 by Marshal Jean-Nicolas Soult, King Joseph's chief of staff. Nevertheless, Ney ignored this premature order since his 6th Corps was scattered across seventy-five miles of Spanish countryside gathering food in the exhausted provinces of Old Castile. When King Joseph saw the ease with which Soult occupied Andalusia during the first weeks of January, he ordered Ney to summon the garrison of Ciudad Rodrigo. He was convinced that Ney need only present himself before the walls of the city to secure the surrender of its garrison. Ney was not in agreement but he issued orders for the concentration of his corps. On 8 February his infantry and cavalry marched out of Salamanca, across the old Roman bridge, toward Ciudad Rodrigo, followed by artillery and supply train. Within three days his troops had poured onto the sprawling plain surrounding the fortress. The following morning, 11 February, he summoned the governor, Lieutenant General Andrés Pérez de Herrasti who quickly rejected the offer. Ney reconnoitered the town fortifications and during the night his artillery lobbed shells into the town. Several fires were ignited, but the citizens soon extinguished them. It was obvious that King Joseph was wrong in his assumption that Ciudad Rodrigo would surrender to French intimidation. The next day Ney withdrew his corps toward Salamanca, with his rations depleted, his animals exhausted, and his soldiers disgusted by this exercise in futility.⁶

Several weeks after his return to Salamanca, Ney received a letter from Napoleon instructing him to deploy the 6th Corps to observe the passes into Portugal and post strong detachments around Ciudad Rodrigo. Ney, however, was not willing to implement the order until reinforcements had been sent to cover such an investment.⁷

Meanwhile, Wellington's army, supported by Spanish forces under the command of General Martin de La Carrera and the guerrilla chieftain, Don Julian Sanchez, was deployed within a few miles of Ciudad Rodrigo along the west bank of the Agueda River; all were ready to march in support of the city if the French attempted an investment with insufficient forces. Troops of Ney's 6th Corps were poised along the right bank of the Agueda from San Felices de los Gallegos northward. During the month of March his infantry was engaged with Allied troops near the village of Barba de Puerco. However, no serious effort was made to invest Ciudad Rodrigo despite continual letters from Soult in March and early May to complete the investment of the city.⁸

The brigades of the 6th Corps were deployed in the vicinity of Ciudad Rodrigo to observe the town and the Allied army beyond the Agueda. General Claude-François Ferey's brigade, composed of the 66th and 82nd Line, the Hanoverian Legion, and the 25th Dragoons, occupied a line from San Felices el Chico through Sancti Spiritus to the city to blockade it from the east. General Antoine-Louis Maucune occupied Tenebrón with the 69th Line and the 15th *Chasseurs à cheval*. This force was supported by General Edouard-François Simon's brigade which was scattered from San Felices de los Gallegos to Toro and Zamora. Their forces tightened the investment of Ciudad Rodrigo on 25 April when Ney learned that Junot's 8th Corps would be available to support his operations.⁹

As soon as Masséna recovered from the rigors of the trip to Valladolid, he resolved to travel to Salamanca to confer with Ney about the tactics to be employed in the siege. Accompanied by his faithful aide-de-camp, Jean-Jacques Pelet, General Junot, and his artillery commander, Jean-Baptiste Éblé, Masséna and a small entourage picked their way across the Castellan plain to Salamanca where he was greeted by the impetuous Ney. For hours they discussed tactics and strategy. Ney proposed an immediate attack on the Allied army before besieging Ciudad Rodrigo; this was considered at length. Early the next day the Prince returned to Valladolid to develop strategy for the campaign. He wrote to King Joseph that an attack against Wellington's army beyond Ciudad Rodrigo would "be the surest means to reduce the time in taking Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida." Nevertheless, when he considered Ney's proposal with his staff, it became apparent that an attack on Wellington's army was not necessary to besiege Ciudad Rodrigo. Pelet drew up a six-point analysis of the proposal rejecting Ney's proposition.¹⁰

Meanwhile, Ney remained at Salamanca impatiently awaiting Masséna's decision on the strategy to be implemented against Ciudad Rodrigo. When he did not receive the Prince's decision promptly, Ney sent an insubordinate letter to Masséna requesting orders to attack Wellington's army or begin the siege; otherwise, he would withdraw his troops to cantonments. Ney soon regretted his intemperate action for within a few hours Masséna's decision reached him announcing the deployment of Junot's corps to cover the investment of Ciudad Rodrigo. Consequently, Ney began frantic efforts to complete arrangements for the siege. The village of Sancti Spiritus was transformed into a workshop for the engineers. At Pedrotoro the artillerymen established a depot for the siege train. French foragers redoubled their efforts to collect food. When the Spanish villages were unable to provide the proscribed supplies, hostages were taken from among the wealthy landowners. Despite these efforts, it became evident that "preparations were far from complete."¹¹

Through the month of May, Masséna remained at the palace of Charles V with his mistress, Henriette Leberton, who had accompanied him to Spain. Nevertheless, he was deeply immersed in efforts to secure adequate supplies from the exhausted provinces under his jurisdiction. These logistical problems were further aggravated by Wellington's wise decision to concentrate his army near Ciudad Rodrigo. Consequently, Masséna would have to provide food and supplies not only for Ney's 6th Corps, deployed to invest the fortress, but also for Junot's 8th Corps posted to discourage any advance by Wellington to raise the siege.

On 29 May 1810 Masséna transferred his headquarters to Salamanca to be closer to the scene of operations. Likewise Ney advanced the headquarters of the 6th Corps to the magnificent old Premonstratensian monastery of Nuestra Señora de la Caridad, three kilometers south of Ciudad Rodrigo. Before the day had ended, Ney began a reconnaissance of the fortress. Masséna, meanwhile, anxious to see the fortifications of Ciudad Rodrigo and assure himself of the point of attack, decided to visit the 6th Corps. Traveling with his aide-de-camp and General Éblé in open carriages, Masséna took the road to Ciudad Rodrigo and arrived unannounced on 1 June. He immediately visited Ferey's brigade on the heights of Palomar above the banks of the Agueda where men were working to erect a trestle bridge. Another bridge was being thrown up across the Agueda below La Caridad but darkness precluded a visit to this site. Besides the troops posted at Sancti Spiritus, Tenebrón, and along the Agueda, other units of the 6th Corps occupied the area around La Caridad and the heights of Cantarranas.¹²

Early the next morning Masséna left La Caridad, riding on horseback, to inspect the infantry surrounding Ciudad Rodrigo. The troops, dressed in their finest uniforms, despite the deep mud everywhere, were drawn up in perfect order to receive the Prince. The companies of Maucune's regiments had set up great eagles fashioned from straw to honor their commander in chief. Once his reconnaissance had been completed, Masséna sat down with his staff and Ney before the troops of Loison's division to discuss details of the siege. Surrounded by the engineer and artillery officers, they agreed upon the point of attack and the tactics to be employed in the reduction of the fortress. Since General Joseph-Felix Lazowski had not yet joined the army, Ney insisted that his commanding engineer, *Chef de bataillon* Couche, direct the siege while Junot proposed Colonel Eléonor Dufriche de Valazé of the 8th Corps. Masséna was inclined to appoint Valazé but, to maintain some semblance of harmony, he acquiesced in Ney's choice. General Charles-Étienne Ruty was confirmed as artillery commander by Masséna and Éblé. Before Masséna left the conference, the artillerymen assured him that the Spanish guns would be silenced three

hours after their bombardment began. Satisfied with the arrangements and commitment of his officers, Masséna returned to Ney's headquarters.¹³

Upon their arrival at La Caridad, Ney again raised his illusive project of an attack against Wellington's army. Masséna responded with the arguments developed in Pelet's six-point memorandum of 20 May; discussion of the proposal was ended by Ney momentarily. Early on the morning of 4 June, Masséna and his staff climbed into their carriages for the return to Salamanca. As soon as he had arrived at headquarters, Masséna wrote a melancholy letter to Berthier in Paris concerning his discussions and his apprehension over Ney's judgment and premature investment. He was unalterably convinced that Herrasti, with the aid of the Anglo-Portuguese army, the armies of the Marquis de La Romana, and La Carrera, would defend Ciudad Rodrigo until the last extreme.¹⁴

While Ney's corps tightened the investment of Ciudad Rodrigo in order to halt sortie activities by the garrison, Masséna returned to Salamanca to face the escalating administrative duties and logistical problems. His most immediate concerns centered around the lack of food and the continual jurisdictional disputes with the 8th Corps. Masséna's temporary quartermaster general, Michaux, labored to organize adequate support units for the army. The commissariat was augmented, the medical and ambulance corps were expanded, extraordinary numbers of wagons were collected to create vast wagon trains, and every effort was made to minimize the friction between the brigade and divisional commanders. Nevertheless, complaints began to reach Masséna about the lack of food. As a result of strenuous efforts by the army commissariat, the first of a long series of convoys began the arduous trek from Valladolid and Salamanca to Ciudad Rodrigo. Each day hundreds of wagons crossed the Roman bridge at Salamanca and set out along the mud-clogged road toward the corps of Ney and Junot, despite constant threats from guerrillas. The quantity of supplies expended each day was staggering.¹⁵

To sustain operations, Masséna exerted constant pressure on the governor of Valladolid, General François-Étienne Kellermann, for the vigorous collection of supplies. *Contributions extraordinaire* were collected from the citizens living within the provinces under Masséna's jurisdiction, especially for use by the artillery and engineers. Yet, tension between Masséna and his subordinates continued to mount. On occasion, his authority was ignored by the corps commanders who often signed their orders as "general in chief" although he alone held that rank. Similarly, his lieutenants often wrote directly to Napoleon or Berthier describing his orders and activities in detail. By subtle insinuations regarding his judgment, they attempted to undermine Napoleon's confidence in Masséna. Opposition from his provincial governors limited his resources and

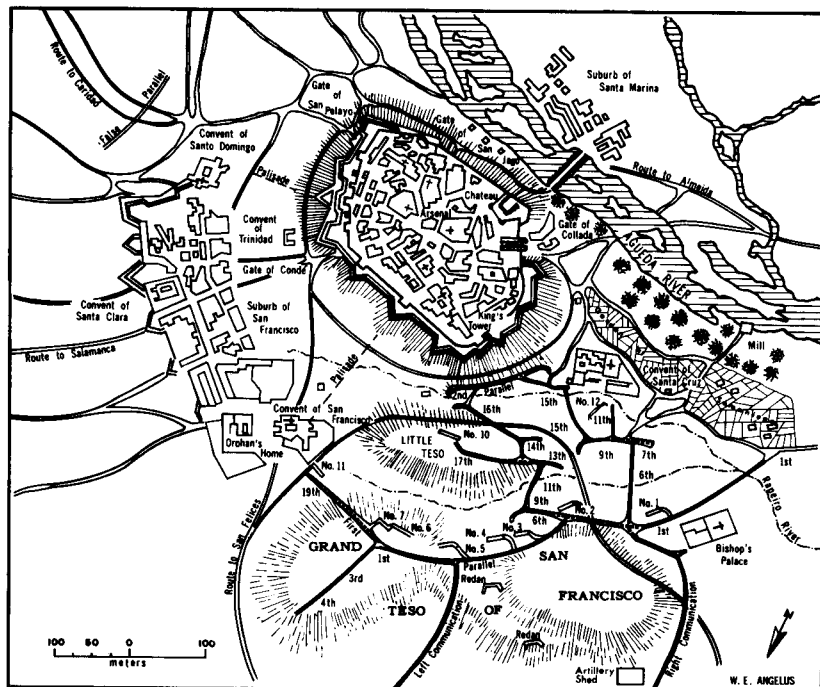
manpower, undermined discipline, gave rise to corruption and malfeasance, and by their brutal behavior toward the populace, they solidified Spanish opposition against the French; the loyalty and commitment of both Junot and Ney appeared transitory, but Napoleon and Berthier refused to act, convinced that his problems were exaggerated.¹⁶

When Masséna received his first dispatch from Berthier detailing Napoleon's intentions, he was stunned. Napoleon minimized Wellington's army, ignored 23,000 Portuguese troops, and refused to consider the logistical problems that he faced. Napoleon's instructions were simple and direct, but they were based on incomplete information and erroneous assumptions that had little relationship to Masséna's predicament. Napoleon reiterated his earlier instructions, insisting on the siege of "first Ciudad Rodrigo and afterwards Almeida." At the same time, he drastically reduced Masséna's forces. To besiege and capture Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, to invade and conquer Portugal, and to drive Wellington's Anglo-Portuguese army into the sea, Masséna's army was to be limited to 65,000 men although Napoleon had promised him unlimited manpower and resources.¹⁷ By this decision, Napoleon made one of the most fatal and far-reaching blunders of his career. He had minimized the staggering logistical problems facing Masséna while miscalculating on the determination of the garrison of Ciudad Rodrigo and Wellington's army to resist the French juggernaut. By calling for the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, Napoleon's strategy conveniently coincided with Wellington's scheme for the mobilization of Portugal and continued resistance in the Peninsula.

The French engineers opened the trenches on the night of 15 June but Ney was not satisfied. Masséna sent Pelet to reason with Ney about the timetable but he could not persuade him. Masséna was anxious to take a more active role in the siege, but he was forced to remain at Salamanca until 24 June to insure adequate resources for the army. Before Masséna arrived at La Caridad to take up his new quarters, Ney transferred his quarters to the engineer's shed behind Grand Teso.¹⁸

As soon as Masséna's staff had occupied the monastery, a serious controversy erupted between the two marshals. According to Masséna's aide-de-camp, 27 June had been designated as the date to commence fire on Ciudad Rodrigo and no earlier than the 26th. Despite these arrangements, Ney decided to begin the bombardment early the morning of the 25th; apparently he hoped the fortress would fall before Masséna's arrival and that he would gain all the glory for the capture.

Unknown to Ney, Masséna had already arrived at La Caridad. Consequently, when Ney gave instructions to commence fire early the next morning, the 25th, General Éblé informed Masséna immediately; he was furious. Masséna sent Pelet and his chief of staff, General François-Nicolas Fririon, to Ney's headquarters. Pelet recalled, "We had hardly arrived when the Prince himself came, complaining about the haste and the disastrous effects it might have." After a heated conversation which created new animosity and distrust between Masséna and his subordinates, it was agreed to commence the bombardment early the following morning.



Ciudad Rodrigo

Accordingly, at 4:00 A.M. on 25 June the artillery batteries opened fire. Later in the day Masséna visited the siege site to examine the trench work and the operations of the artillery; he was dissatisfied with the efforts of Couche and Ruty. He personally redirected the artillery, recalled the artillerymen of the 6th Corps for service with the siege batteries, and ordered a reduction in the use of projectiles. He then wrote poignantly to Éblé, "You will order General Ruty to

do nothing in the future except what you order, based on my instructions. You will write a report to me each night on what has passed during the day and one in the morning on what has occurred at night." He cautioned, "Everything demands that this siege be conducted with the greatest vigor." He also ordered a hut constructed by the hamlet of Casasola, near Grand Teso; he would remain there during the siege to insure the proper fulfillment of his orders.¹⁹

As the trenches crept slowly toward the walls of Ciudad Rodrigo, the workers came under the murderous fusillade of the Spanish troops in the convent and suburb of San Francisco. Several efforts were made by Ney's troops to capture the suburbs, but each attempt was beaten back with heavy losses. The French artillery pounded the city wall before the cathedral and lobbed thousands of shells into the town while suffering heavy casualties from the Spanish guns. By daybreak the city wall and the faussebraie (secondary exterior wall) appeared to have been reduced into debris.²⁰ By 2:00 P.M. General Ruty announced that the breach was practicable for an assault. Although there was some doubt about Ruty's observation since the counterscarp was in tact, Ney sent an aide-de-camp, Captain Esmenard, to Governor Herrasti with a summons which concluded with this warning: "You have to choose between honorable capitulation and the terrible vengeance of a victorious army." Brave old Herrasti replied confidently, "After forty-nine years in the service, I know the laws of war and my military duty. The fortress of Ciudad Rodrigo is not in a state to capitulate and no breach is formed that makes it necessary. In consequence, I can only invite Your Excellency to continue your operations against the fortress. I will know myself ... when the circumstances are such as to request capitulation after taking care to protect my honor which is more dear to me than life itself." Following Esmenard's return to headquarters, Ney, perhaps embarrassed by what clearly appeared to be a premature summons, resumed fire against the fortress, but with limited success. The Spanish artillerymen inflicted appalling losses upon the French.²¹

Later in the day Masséna received a dispatch from Ney, accompanied by reports from Ruty and Couche, noting the lack of progress in the siege and depletion of munitions. With less than 600 projectiles remaining for the pieces of sixteen and twenty-four, they suggested that the gunfire be carefully restricted. They calculated that "eight or ten days" would be necessary to crown the glacis. Ney sent their report on to Masséna with his concurrence.²²

Masséna was infuriated when he received the report. He regarded it as an attempt to blame the error of rushing siege operations on him. It seemed as though the report was made to justify the delays in the siege and to relieve Ney

of the responsibilities of a precipitous siege. (In fact, Ney delayed siege operations as long as possible.) There was no doubt that munitions were disappearing, food was being consumed, soldiers were suffering deprivations, casualties were mounting, and the "poor use of the remaining munitions could reduce [the French] to a bloody but fruitless attack against a partially completed breach or to the disgrace of raising the siege."²³

Masséna immediately convened a council of war with Ney, his divisional generals, and the artillery and engineer officers to announce an alteration in siege operations. Since Lazowski had not yet arrived to take command of the engineers, Masséna named Colonel Valazé to assume the direction of the siege, replacing Couche, while Éblé would supersede Ruty as commander of the artillery. These modifications aggravated the already strained relationship between Masséna and the 6th Corps commander. Ney regarded the replacement of his officers, Couche and Ruty, as unwarranted meddling, while Masséna regarded the changes as absolutely necessary. As Pelet recalled, "Henceforth, it became necessary to entreat the Prince to maintain as much moderation as firmness in his relations with the Marshal."²⁴

In connection with this controversy, it was later claimed by Junot's wife, the Duchess d'Abrantès, that Masséna sent Valazé to Ney on her husband's recommendation to take charge of the siege, but Ney sent him back a few days later with the insulting comment that "the Prince ... is not going to upset my staff." The Prince ordered Valazé to return to Ney, according to Madame Junot, to assume command of the siege, but several days later he returned again with an indiscrete letter--bordering on insubordination. The Duchess claimed that Masséna shouted to her husband, "I want this young man to conduct the siege, and by the devil in hell, Monsieur Ney shall bend the knee before my will, or my name is not Masséna." A colorful fabrication that only reinforced Madame Junot's image as a gossip monger.²⁵

Once Valazé had examined the progress of the siege work, Masséna called a meeting attended by Ney, Junot, Éblé, and Ruty to consider his proposals. A detailed report of the various elements of the siege were presented and, much to Masséna's dismay, Valazé concluded by suggesting that the trenches be advanced to the crest of the glacis and the counterscarp be blown up. A new breach battery would have to be raised from Tesillo and two enfilading batteries erected on the flanks for use against the northern wall of Ciudad Rodrigo. There was opposition to this plan by Ruty, but the Prince ignored him and adopted Valazé's proposals. Nevertheless, Masséna was exasperated by the situation and he complained in a letter to Berthier, "I expected that the actual breach on which we have fired until now, and which is well advanced, would force them

to capitulate without the need of making other works, but it is necessary ... to crown the counterscarp and pound a breach 120 or 150 feet in the fortress." His frustration led him to threaten, "I will make another summons and if they refuse a capitulation, I will take it by force and put the garrison to the sword without sparing the inhabitants who are most stubborn." Masséna's frustration was further intensified by the false rumors spread by Herrasti and the garrison, suggesting the imminent surrender that never seemed to come.²⁶

French trench work continued night and day while the French and Spanish artillery men exchanged gunfire from dawn to dusk. Through the exhaustive efforts of General Jean-François Lambert, quartermaster general of the army, vast wagon convoys laden with foodstuffs and munitions continued to arrive at the siege site, but dissension and pessimism spread within the army. The attacks on the convent and suburb of San Francisco by the French were beaten back with heavy losses. Almost nightly, Herrasti sent sorties out of the fortress to harass the trench workers.²⁷

By 8 July, the twenty-fourth day of open trenches, the enfilading batteries had been completed and were firing with considerable success on the north wall of the fortress. The sappers had crowned the glacis and were in the act of constructing the mine gallery toward the stone wall of the counterscarp. The new breach battery on Tesillo had been armed and was ready to commence fire the following morning. At 4:00 A.M. on 9 July, the breach battery opened fire with devastating results. For the first time the French artillery demonstrated a marked superiority in firepower. The bombardment continued throughout the day and the sappers continued enlarging the trenches for the assault. The mine chamber was packed with 800 pounds of explosives and at 2:30 A.M. it was detonated with a tremendous blast, leaving a breach twenty-five feet wide. The charges were carefully measured and placed in such a manner that the rubble from the explosion formed a ramp across the ditch about eight feet in breadth, thereby permitting the assault troops convenient and relatively safe access to the foot of the breach.²⁸

During the night specific instructions were issued to each battery commander. At 4:00 A.M. all forty-six guns unleashed a concentrated bombardment on the breach and the adjoining walls. According to an eyewitness, "Bombs were falling down with great rapidity and excellent marksmanship. On every side arose thick clouds of dust and smoke, pierced by the flames of the fires. The wreckage of buildings and the walls was tumbling down with great noise, and several of the small magazines exploded periodically with tremendous detonations. The city seemed to be overwhelmed with so much firing."

Consequently, plans were initiated for an attack on the city. Assault columns were organized to lead the attack through the breach and into the fortress.²⁹

Meanwhile, a volatile and emotional issue arose at Masséna's headquarters. "Everywhere there was talk of assault, of vengeance by the sword, of examples to be made," recalled "Masséna's aide-de-camp. The soldiers were now demanding the town as a prize for their suffering and deprivations during the siege. At first Masséna expressed a rather stern attitude to Berthier concerning the fate of the garrison. On 6 July he promised: "I will pound the breach again in order to render it more practicable and take the town by assault. I believe they will not listen to talk of capitulation. They are fanatics directed by a gang of priests who have closed themselves up in a fortress and it is impossible to make them listen to reason. Two days later he wrote, "If the insurgents do not listen to reason, I will mount the assault." Masséna believed that the governor and garrison were willing to consider a surrender but the junta and clergy were opposed to a capitulation. Early on the morning of 10 July, as final preparations were being completed for the attack, Masséna wrote to Berthier, "I have made all my dispositions to deliver the assault this evening unless a capitulation makes us masters of the fortress."³⁰

Apparently Masséna wanted to project the image of a determined, unrelenting commander, but those on his staff knew that he wished to avoid an assault and all the bloodshed and misery that would accompany it. In fact, he assured them "that the fortress would be saved from such fury." He was keenly aware of Joseph Bonaparte's interest in the city and population, as the king of Spain. On 8 August he had already promised Joseph: "Be completely confident that I will neglect nothing to bring about a capitulation that alone can preserve [the people] and the town from destruction that the law of war will authorize if the place is seized by assault." The Prince concluded, "I will summon them again and I hope as much as I desire that the results of the summons will place the principles of humanity in harmony together with our desires." Nevertheless, according to Pelet, "All the army talked only about burning the whole city and massacring the entire garrison."³¹

At noon on 10 July it was obvious that within a few hours the bombardment would perfect the breach for an assault. "Everyone seemed to be revolted at the proposition of a new summons. Everyone was ready for the assault and everyone wanted the violence and fury [of a storming]," recalled Pelet. Masséna "grasped the horror of sacking the city and decided to do everything in his power to prevent it." Accordingly, he ordered a final summons at four o'clock, and if the Spanish flag was not lowered within a quarter hour, the signal for the assault would be given.³²

As final preparations were being completed for the assault, troops collected in the trenches opposite the breach to the strains of the regimental bands. The breach was reconnoitered and the red flag was raised on Tesillo signaling the assault at approximately 5:30 P.M. The French infantry scrambled out of the trenches and began to scale the breach. Within moments, Herrasti, who had already met with the junta, ordered the white flag hoisted. Herrasti appeared in the breach in civilian clothing. He was immediately escorted to Ney who was standing at the foot of the breach. The two men shook hands and Ney congratulated Herrasti on a stubborn defense. At the same time the troops of Loison's division marched through the breach and occupied the strategic points in the town. The garrison was disarmed and confined to their barracks as dusk fell.³³

Initially, the French maintained strict discipline over the troops pouring into the town by utilizing patrols, but after dark, large numbers of soldiers slipped through the various gates and begun pillaging. When Masséna became aware of the situation, he sent Pelet into the city with instructions to restore strict order. Pelet found considerable confusion in the town. French troops, interspersed with a few Spanish soldiers who had left their barracks, were engaged in looting houses and commercial establishments. At first some French guards and junior officers condoned this activity. Pelet recalled, "I realized there was no way of imposing any restraint except with saber thrusts.... I struck right and left at the pillagers, no matter who they were." Pelet and his followers lodged complaints with the post commanders; they reacted by recalling their men and sending out patrols to halt the looting. "If the disorder did not stop completely," wrote Pelet, "at least word spread that it would not be allowed or tolerated." Before midnight all irregularities had ended and order was restored throughout the town.³⁴

The next morning, Masséna entered the city and walked along the walls with his staff. Herrasti, his artillery commander, D. Francisco Ruiz Gómez and two engineers were introduced to Masséna who declared, "This picture indicates enough the brave defense that you have made; but you were too obstinate." Herrasti left a dismal description of the fortress: "The horrible spectacle that the fortress presented the day of the surrender was the greatest eulogy to its defense; in the midst of its ruins it is hardly possible to distinguish buildings and to pass through the streets obstructed by ruins.... It is only necessary to see the place in order to know how great the resistance has been." This view was substantiated by Pelet who followed Masséna around the city walls: "Everything adjoining [the breach] had been crushed, pounded, and destroyed. The ruins and devastation extended to the middle of the city. At every step one could see collapsed or burned houses."³⁵

The siege of Ciudad Rodrigo was not accomplished without considerable loss to Masséna's army. Fourteen officers and 168 men were killed and 34 officers and 1,009 men were wounded. Artillery losses were disproportionately high, but the casualty list did not dampen Masséna's satisfaction.³⁶ In immediate terms, the French victory was in complete accord with Napoleon's timetable for the invasion of Portugal and the expulsion of Wellington's army.

However, unknown to Masséna, his was only a Pyrrhic victory. While his army was engaged in the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo for some three months, Wellington and the Portuguese government were mobilizing the countryside and laboring frantically to complete the formidable Line of Torres Vedras. It was only when he found his invasion route blocked north of Lisbon on 12 October that he began to realize the implications of the lengthy Spanish defense at Ciudad Rodrigo.

Ultimately, Masséna was forced to withdraw from Portugal with serious losses; the retreat only ended at his base of operation—Ciudad Rodrigo. He was soon recalled to France in disgrace and Napoleon's last and greatest effort to dominate the Peninsula and drive the British into the sea had come to an ignominious end. One of the major factors responsible for this failure rests with the stubborn Spanish defenders of Ciudad Rodrigo who resisted Masséna's army and gained the vital time necessary for Wellington to implement his strategy for the defense of Iberia. Herrasti, imprisoned in France until the end of the war, returned to Spain as the "Hero of Ciudad Rodrigo." It is curious to note that although Wellington liberated Ciudad Rodrigo in 1812 and was named "Duke of Ciudad Rodrigo," his troops burned and pillaged the city. On the other hand, Masséna, "l'enfant chéri de la victoire," who personally intervened to prevent the pillage and sack of the city by French troops, saw his brilliant military career come to an abrupt end with his failure of the campaign in Portugal. Recalled in disgrace, he would never again command a French army on the battlefield; he deserved a better fate! As for Ciudad Rodrigo, its name is included among the list of French victories on the Arc de Triumph in Paris as well as on the regimental flags of the British army.

To recognize the pivotal role played by Ciudad Rodrigo in the Peninsular War, the International Congress on the Peninsular War was convened on 2-5 August 1984 in the actual buildings besieged by the French in 1810 at Ciudad Rodrigo and at Almeida in Portugal. Organized by the Ayuntamiento de Ciudad Rodrigo, the Câmara Municipal de Almeida, the Diputación Provincial de Salamanca, and Florida State University, 140 participants were joined by descendants of the participants in the siege—the 7th Duke and Duchess of

Wellington and Ciudad Rodrigo, Victor Masséna, 7th Prince d'Essling, Conde Pérez de Herrasti, 7th Count and Countess Clauzel whose ancestor commanded a division in Junot's corps in 1810 and later engaged Wellington at Salamanca in 1812. All four stood together, arm in arm on the wall where the breach had been pounded by French guns in 1810 and British guns in 1812.³⁷

Donald D. Horward, Professor History, Director of the Institute on Napoleon and the French Revolution at Florida State University, has written eight books and co-authored or contributed to ten others on his subject. He is considered to be the foremost scholar on Napoleon and the Iberian Peninsula, and has been decorated by the French, American, Portuguese, Czech, and Spanish governments for his contributions in the Revolutionary period. He was elected to the Portuguese Academy of History in 1991 and is the only American to be decorated Grand Officer of the Order of Infante Dom Henrique (1992) by Portugal's President Mário Soares. Among his many distinctions and achievements, he is also an *Officier* of the *Ordres des Palmes Academique*, an order established by Napoleon in 1808 for contributions to historical studies and sciences.

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ENDNOTES:

¹. A version of this paper was presented at the International Congress on the Peninsular War at Ciudad Rodrigo on 3 August 1984 in the Casa de la Tierra, a restored palace that survived the sieges of Masséna and Wellington as well the Carlist and Spanish Civil Wars.

². Napoleon Bonaparte, *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier publiée par ordre de l'Empereur Napoléon III* (Paris, 1858-69, No. 16385, Imperial Decree, 17 April 1810, XX, 338.

³. Author Wellesley, *The Dispatches of the Field Marshal, the Duke of Wellington, K.G., during his various campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, the Low Countries, and France from 1799 to 1818*. Ed. John Gurwood (London, 1835-38), Wellington to Liverpool, 2 April 1810, VI, 5-10; For details, see: Donald D. Horward, "Wellington as a Strategist, 1808-1814," *Wellington: Studies in the Military and Political Career of the First Duke of Wellington*, Ed. Norman Gash (Manchester, 1990), 87-116; Donald D. Horward, "Wellington's Peninsular Strategy, Portugal, and the Lines of Torres Vedras," *Portuguese Studies Review* II (1992-93): 46-60; Donald D. Horward, "British Seapower and its Influence upon the Peninsular War," *Naval War College Review* XXXI (1978): 54-71; Donald D. Horward, "Wellington and the Defense of Portugal," *The International History Review* XI (1989): 39-54.

⁴. Archives de Masséna, MSS, Berthier to Masséna, 18 April 1810, LII, 8-10. This manuscript collection is in the possession of Victor Andre Masséna, the 7th Prince d'Essling.

⁵. Jean-Baptiste Marbot, *Mémoires du general baron de Marbot* (Paris, 1891), II, 332; Lauré Permon Junot, Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires de madame la duchesse d'Abrantès ou souvenirs historique sur Napoléon* (Paris, 1831-33), XII I, 63-67.

⁶. Henri Bonnal, *La vie militaire du maréchal Ney, duc d'Elchingen, prince de la Moskowa* (Paris, 1910-14), Ney to Soult, 6, 7 February 1810, III, 291, 288.

⁷. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, No. 16245, Napoleon to Berthier, 12 February 1810; XX, 239-42.

⁸. Donald D. Horward, *Napoleon and Iberia--The Twin Sieges of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, 1810* (Tallahassee, 1984; London, 1994), pp. 18-21.

⁹. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁰. Donald D. Horward, *The French Campaign in Portugal: An account by Jean-Jacques Pelet, 1810-1811*. Ed. trans., annot. (Minneapolis, 1973), pp. 22-23, 33-34; Archives de Masséna, Masséna to Joseph, 17 May 1810, LI, 121.

¹¹. Archives de Masséna, Ney to Masséna, 18, 20 May 1810, LII, 192-93, 201; Masséna to Ney, 19, 21 May 1810, LI, 133-34; Horward, *Napoleon and Iberia*, p. 61.

¹². *Ibid.*, Ney to Masséna, 31 May 1810, LII, 255-56, 261-62.

¹³. Horward, *Pelet*, pp. 51-54.

¹⁴. France, Archives de la guerre, Service historique de l'armée, Chateau de Vincennes, Correspondance: Armée de Portugal, MSS, Masséna to Berthier, 5 June 1810, Carton C⁷8.

¹⁵. Archives de Masséna, Ney to Masséna, 31 May 1810, LII, 261-62; Correspondance: Armée de Portugal, No. 432, Loison to Ney, 11 June 1810,

Carton C⁷20. Archives de Masséna, Lambert to Masséna, 3, 5, 8 June 1810, LIII, 47, 74-75, 108, 110; Masséna to Lambert, 7 June 1810, LI, 135.

¹⁶. Correspondance: Armée de Portugal, Masséna to Kellermann, 10 June 1810, Carton C⁷8; François-Nicolas Fririon, *Journal historique de la campagne de Portugal...* (Paris, 1841), p. 11; Jean-Baptiste Koch, *Mémoires de Masséna...* (Paris, 1848-50), VII, 35-36, 63.

¹⁷. *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, Nos. 16504, 16519, Napoleon to Berthier, 29 May (two letters) 1810, XX, 438-39, 447-49.

¹⁸. Horward, *Pelet*, p. 59.

¹⁹. Archives de Masséna, Éblé to Masséna, 20 June 1810, LIII, 253; Horward, *Pelet*, p. 65; Masséna to Éblé, 9:30 P.M., 26 June 1810, LI, 140.

²⁰. Correspondance: Armée de Portugal, Masséna to Berthier, 27 June 1810, Carton C⁷8; Archives de Masséna, Ney to Masséna, 9:00 P.M., 27 June, 28 June 1810, LIV, 72-74, 83.

²¹. Archives de Masséna, Ney to Masséna, 10:00 P.M., 28 June 1810, LIV, 83-84; Bonnal, *Ney*, Ruty to Ney, 28 June 1810, III, 349; Ney to Herrasti, 28 June 1810, LIV, 81; Andres Perez de Herrasti, *Relacion histórica y circunstanciada de los sucesos del sitio de la plaza de Ciudad-Rodrigo en el año de 1810* (Madrid, 1814), Herrasti to Ney, 28 June 1810, p. 84, Horward, *Napoleon and Iberia*, p. 142.

²². *Ibid.*, Ruty and Couche to Ney, 29 June 1810, LIV, 97-98; Ney to Masséna, 29 June 1810, LIV, 96; Horward, *Pelet*, pp. 53-54.

²³. Horward, *Pelet*, p. 68-69; Horward, *Napoleon and Iberia*, p. 145.

²⁴. Abrantès, *Mémoires*, XIII, 86-91; Horward, *Napoleon and Iberia*, pp. 347-49, n. 22; Horward, *Pelet*, p. 68-69; Jacques-Vital Belmas, *Journaux des sièges faits ou soutenus par les français dans le peninsula, de 1807 à 1814* (Paris, 1836-37), Valazé to Masséna, 1 July 1810, III, 243.

²⁵. Abrantès, *Mémoires*, XIII, 86-91; Horward, *Napoleon and Iberia*, 347-49, n. 22.

²⁶. Belmas, *Journaux des sièges*, Valazé to Masséna, 1 July 1810, III, 243; Correspondance: Armée de Portugal, Masséna to Berthier, 2 July 1810, Carton C⁷8; Horward, *Napoleon and Iberia*, p. 147.

²⁷. Horward, *Napoleon and Iberia*, pp. 155-58, 165, 168-69.

²⁸. Archives de Masséna, Ney to Masséna, 9 July 1810, LIV, 226-27; Horward, *Pelet*, pp. 77-78; Belmas, *Journaux des sièges*, III, 253, Herrasti, *Relacion histórica*, Herrasti to Secretario de la Guerra, 29 July 1810, pp. 91-201.

²⁹. Horward, *Pelet*, pp. 78-79; Archives de Masséna, Ney to Masséna, 11 July 1810, LIV, 252-54.

³⁰. *Ibid.*, p. 76; Archives de Masséna, Masséna to Berthier, 6, 8, 10 July 1810, LI, 46-47.

³¹. Archives de Masséna, Masséna to Joseph, 8 July 1810, LI, 123; Ney to Masséna, 11 July 1810, LIV, 252-53; Horward, *Pelet*, p. 76.

³². Horward, *Pelet*, p. 79.

³³. Herrasti, *Relacion histórica*, Herrasti to Ney, 10 July 1810, p. 86; Herrasti to Secretario de la Guerra, 29 August 1810, pp. 91-109, Jacques-Louis Hulot, *Souvenirs militaires du baron Hulot, général de artillerie, 1773-1843* (Paris, 1886), p. 310.

³⁴. Horward, *Pelet*, pp. 80-82; Herrasti, *Relacion histórica*, pp. 56-57.

³⁵. *Ibid.*, p. 83-84; Herrasti, *Relacion histórica*, Herrasti to Secretario de la Guerra, 30 July 1810, pp. 86-91.

³⁶. Correspondance: Armée de Portugal, Masséna to Berthier, 12 July 1810, Carton C⁷8; Archives de Masséna, Masséna to Berthier, 12 July 1810, LI, 50-51.

³⁷. Donald D. Horward, "International Congresses and Iberia: A Case Study," *Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies IX* (1984): 31-34; Donald D. Horward, "Reflections on an International Congress," *Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies X* (1985): 26-31.