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Frederick C. Schneid

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Frederick C. Schneid : Napoleon's Italian Campaigns: 1805-1815 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Napoleon's Italian Campaigns: 1805-1815:

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. While Napoleon was away...By Tom HolmbergSchneid, author of the excellent Soldiers of Napoleon's Kingdom of Italy (Westview, 1995), presents a brief overview of the campaigns in Italy between 1805 and 1815. This volume, unlike Schneid's previous book, is military history in the sense of

focusing solely on campaigns and battles. Schneid looks at the chief military campaigns of 1805, 1809, 1813-14, and 1815 (Murat's last hurrah and Suchet's last stand in Savoy), covering the battles of Caldiero, Maida, Sacile, Piave, Raab, Mincio, and Tolentino. What went on between campaigns is passed over lightly and the book presumes knowledge by the reader of the Napoleonic era as a whole. Political and diplomatic affairs are touched upon only as they affect military matters. Schneid tells us briefly what happened, where it happened and how it happened. He does not analyze the political or diplomatic reasons why it happened, nor does he look at the larger implications of these campaigns. The title of the book is, of course, misleading. During the years covered, Napoleon was fighting in Germany and elsewhere. Campaigning in Italy was left to his marshals, Jourdan, Masséna, etc., or to his son-in-law and Viceroy, Eugène de Beauharnais. Schneid can be excused, on marketing reasons, for entitling the volume "Napoleon's" rather than "Eugène's" or even "Charles's Italian Campaigns." The campaigns in Italy during this period were largely a sideshow to battles occurring elsewhere. Napoleon's 1805 campaign was perhaps his most masterful, so events in Germany overshadowed those in Italy. Masséna, less energetic than in the past and strategically "less than brilliant," still managed to fulfill his role of preventing the Austrian Archduke Charles from affecting the campaign in Germany. Schneid errors in presenting the Battle of Maida (1806) as a classic British line versus French column battle, following Oman, who in later editions admitted his error. For the 1809 campaign Schneid prefers Epstein's (Prince Eugene at War: 1809) more positive assessment of Eugène's performance to that of Macdonald and Pelet. For the 1813-1814 campaign Schneid unfortunately has to compete with the much fuller recent account by Nafziger and Gioannini (The Defense of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Northern Italy, 1813-1814, also by Praeger, 2002). Schneid indicates that this book was written prior to his *Soldiers of Napoleon's Kingdom of Italy*, which was Schneid's doctoral dissertation, and laid aside for a number of years. I did find a number of errors that indicate the book might have benefited from another run through the editorial process (if books are edited these days). For instance, Schneid inexplicably refers to William Bentinck throughout (including the index) as William Bentick. One also finds occasional partial sentences, such as, "Neither he nor Bellegarde found prospect of a Bonapartist ruler in Italy appealing." (p. 141) In addition, the dating of some events, such as that of Murat's "treachery," is confused. Though not an error, Schneid mentions that by the time Metternich replied to Murat's advances in 1813, Murat was already on his way to Dresden, where he had been ordered by Napoleon. Schneid indicates that Murat did not respond to the Austrians' belated offers because Murat "was already on his way to join the Emperor." Nafziger adds the detail that Metternich's message was in cipher and Murat didn't have the key. Nafziger also adds that despite this, Murat kept a representative in the Allied camp who kept him informed of developments there. The book lacks an analytical index that, because the book covers a number of campaigns, would have been helpful. Also included are orders of battle for the 1805, 1809, 1813-14 and 1815 campaigns (down to brigade and regimental levels). There are eight maps, seven of which are for specific battles and one of northern Italy. The maps, however, are not detailed and will probably disappoint most military history readers. The bibliography includes archival sources from France, Italy and Austria, as well as published memoirs, staff histories and secondary sources. By far, though, the majority of the footnotes refer to French sources. Because Italy was a sideshow Schneid's book is a useful, if not essential, overview of an often-ignored area of Napoleonic history. While Schneid's account of the campaigns of 1805-15 comprise 160 pages of text, Nafziger and Gioannini give us 235 pages on the 1813-14 campaign alone (so if you buy your books by their bulk the Nafziger book will be your first choice). Epstein does a better job at elucidating the often stormy relationship between Eugène and Napoleon. Of use though are Schneid's descriptions of relatively in-depth such largely overlooked battles such as Caldiero. Schneid's account is chronological and his descriptions of battles are straightforward and relatively easy to follow, but rather dry and lacking in the "gunpowder and blood" that distinguishes a master military historian. The chief drawback to the book for the casual reader of military history will be its price.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Battles in Italy during the early 19th Century By Michael Hopper Schneid's book is a very valuable study of some of the main battles fought in Italy during the Napoleonic wars, complete with maps and orders of battle. Schneid draws on a number of archival sources in assembling his work. Historians and war gamers will both find this book of interest because of the level of detail provided, which is very good. In addition, Schneid provides insight on each Italian campaign from 1805-1815, along with factors that most likely influenced the thinking of the commanders. As an example, when reading about Caldiero October 29-31, 1805 other sources such as Marshall-Cornwall's "Marshal Massena" only provide a brief overview of the campaign and the battle. Marshall-Cornwall's map of Caldiero shows key terrain features and relative positioning of some divisions. Schneid's narrative clearly identifies activities for many of the regiments and battalions engaged - a level of detail lacking in almost all English language sources in print to date. The only criticism is that the narrative sometimes assumes the reader has an intimate knowledge of the Italian geography and lesser known town names. When reading this narrative it will help to have access to other source maps such as Kaussler's so as to correlate the information provided in Schneid's superb book.

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Italian Campaigns a Winner By Christopher J. Anders While this book may not be as detailed as some people would like, it definitely fills a void in giving a solid overview for the campaigns in Northern Italy from 1805-1815. Very few other books cover any single campaign in Northern Italy with near as much information as Schneid does much less all of them. Could it have been more detailed? Sure, but then again the same could be said

about many books. If nothing else, Schneid gives the reader a solid platform with which to seek additional information. If the maps had been better, I would have given it the full 5 stars.

The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars raged in Italy for 23 years. In that time, no fewer than eight campaigns involving hundred of thousands of troops were mounted in the Italian peninsula, as France and Austria struggled over this secondary, but still vitally important theater of war. As Frederick Schneid demonstrates in this groundbreaking work, control of Italy was rightly seen by Napoleon as an important means of applying strategic pressure on the Austrians, while simultaneously providing security for France's vulnerable southern flank. As the first in-depth consideration of the struggle for strategically key region, this book places the Italian campaigns into their proper historical context. Beginning with a geo-strategic overview of the Italian peninsula and its place in French and Austrian calculations, Schneid moves on to a careful consideration of the major campaigns that began in 1805, 1809, and 1813. These include studies of the battles at Caldiero, Wagram, and Mincio. The book also provides appendices with complete orders of battle for each campaign.

"In contrast to most treatments of Napoleon's career, which rarely deal with events in which he himself was not personally in command, Napoleon's Italian Campaigns deals with military events in a theater that, after 1801, saw no operations by the "Corsican Ogre." The author thus literally "rescues" from virtual oblivion the long neglected events in Italy, where several major campaigns occurred. Prof. Schneid treats the 1805, 1809, and 1813-1814 campaigns against Austria, and the conquest of Naples, 1805-1806, and the subsequent guerrilla war that left that kingdom unsettled throughout the period, as well as Murat's quixotic bid for domination of the Peninsula in 1815. Beyond question the most complete one volume treatment of the Napoleonic era in Italy."-NYMAS Newsletter

"As a detailed study of a specific theater in Napoleon's dominance of Western Europe, Schneid's book is both excellent and long overdue."-Army History...

"people interested in the minutiae of Napoleonic warfare will find it appealing, and it does serve to fill a significant gap in our knowledge of Napoleonic warfare...the Italian wars were much more than footnotes in the story of Napoleon's defeat."-The Journal of Military History

"Schneid offers an analytical account of the Napoleonic Wars in Italy, emphasizing not only the armies, generals, strategies, tactics, and battles in this theater of war but also the motivations and rationales of the respective participants. His aim is to offer a clearer picture of the Austrians, Neapolitans, and British generals and their armies, particularly how they conducted their campaigns against the Franco-Italian forces of imperial France. A lengthy appendix lists the orders of battle and presents line-drawn battlefield maps."-Reference Research Book News

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About the Author FREDERICK C. SCHNEID is a professor of history at High Point University and author of *Soldiers of Napoleon's Kingdom of Italy*.