

Foreword

The Hermitage Palace in St. Petersburg has a grand hall dedicated to the Russian army generals who served in the wars waged during the Napoleonic period. When Westerners pass through the hall and see the portraits of more than 330 generals, they recognize very few by name or appearance with the exception of the most prominent, such as Mikhail Barclay de Tolly, Mikhail Kutusov, Peter Bagration, Dmitry Dokhturov, and Matvei Platov. Nevertheless, the hall is a pantheon of Russian heroes who fought and often died in the struggle against Napoleon's armies and allies.

The Revolutionary period was one of great activity for the Russian army. Although officially neutral during the War of the First Coalition, Emperor Paul made a major commitment against Republican France in 1799 and sent three armies west. The main Russian army, under the command of the legendary Field Marshal Alexander Suvorov, employed many young inexperienced officers in Italy and Switzerland. Despite the ultimate withdrawal of these armies following General André Masséna's victories during the Zurich campaign, the Russian officers gained valuable experience and exposure to the tactical and strategic changes in warfare spawned by Napoleon and the armies of Republic.

In 1805, the Russian armies faced the Grand Army and Napoleon for the first time. The leadership in the Russian armies proved to be formidable at Amstetten, Durenstein, and Schöngraben, but suffered humiliation at Austerlitz. Nevertheless, the Russian officers continued to improve in leadership and their understanding of Napoleonic tactics. Fourteen months later, they demonstrated these qualities in the battle at Eylau, denying Napoleon the decisive victory he sought. Although successful in repulsing the Grand Army at Heilsburg, four days later the Russian army was lured across the Alle River and crushed at Friedland. After Tilsit, they served as Napoleon's ally in the War of the Fifth Coalition against Austria; meanwhile, other army units were deployed against the Ottoman Empire and the Swedes.

By 1812, after a decade of almost constant warfare, the leadership in the Russian army had improved markedly. Many officers had served in various European theaters and compiled impressive records of success on the battlefield. They faced their greatest challenge and achieved their greatest success in 1812 when Napoleon invaded Russia, only to be driven out six months later. The defeat of Napoleon in the east was the Russian army's crowning achievement for the next 130 years. Now, for the first time, Western readers will have an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the Russian army officers who made these victories possible.

Hundreds of books, including memoirs, journals, and correspondence, have been published in English, French, and German on the Napoleonic period. The names of very few Russian officers appear on their pages. Their names and titles stand out in Russian publications, but are lost to most Western readers. With the completion of this volume by Alexander Mikaberidze, readers interested in the Russian army during the Napoleonic period now have a valuable research tool available. Having just completed a doctoral dissertation on General Prince Peter Bagration, who served in almost every Russian campaign during the period, Dr. Mikaberidze has had the opportunity to delve into the careers of hundreds of Russian officers, as well as the administration of the Russian army.

After tracing the evolution of the Russian army in the 18th century and the Napoleonic period, Dr. Mikaberidze examines the system of enlistments and promotion; the military schools and educational programs; the social composition and status in Russian society; the system of recognition and awards; and the strengths and weaknesses of the Russian army. Biographical sketches are provided for each general, many of the colonels, and some of the lieutenants. There are extensive details on each officer's origin, education, military service, and military awards. In the tradition of the distinguished French historian George Six and his *Dictionnaire bibliographique des Généraux & Amiraux français de la Révolution et de l'empire (1792-1814)*, Dr. Mikaberidze has produced a book that will be invaluable to anyone interested in the Russian army and the campaigns of the Napoleonic period.

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