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# Britons to Arms!

AMONG the various THREATS used by the TYRANNICAL and INSIDIOUS ENEMY, who is attempting our DESTRUCTION and OVERTHROW,

## The Plunder of our Country!

Is held out as the REWARD to the ARMIES which are to INVADE us, and the MURDER of the INHABITANTS!

to gratify the REVENGE of the CORSICAN USURPER, whose diabolical and restless Spirit cannot endure to see us in the Enjoyment of the Fruits of our honest Industry, and the LIBERTIES of our happy CONSTITUTION.

*That this is the avowed Intention of the Invasion of BONAPARTE,*

he has told us in a Hundred different Ways—he has moreover insultingly called us a Nation of Shopkeepers, Tradesmen, Mechanics, and Manufacturers—too fond of our Ease to engage in the Hardships of a Soldier's Life; and that as we depend on our Safety upon our Fleet, he will attempt various LANDINGS BOTH HERE AND IN IRELAND, at the same Time, relying on the Success of one of them to carry his Point—such are his Plans. Be it ours to turn them into DETEAT and DISGRACE.

It is no wonder he should Wish to escape the Vigilance of our BRAVE TABS who have so often made FRANCE feel the Power of their Thunder, and will again whenever they meet them. But, BROTHER COUNTRYMEN!! the present Moment calls to us who inhabit this happy Island, TO PERFORM OUR DUTY ON SHORE, while our Fleets are employed on the Ocean. It is probable, that, from the various Points that FRANCE can make her Attacks, she will succeed in effecting a Landing somewhere.—Let us then be prepared, not only to meet it with Vigilance, but repel it with Success. Let us shew FRANCE, AND ALL THE WORLD,

That there are BRITONS ON SHORE, spread over every Part of the UNITED KINGDOM, ready to meet them at the Point of the Bayonet, and resolved not to allow one to return to FRANCE to tell the Tale of their Overthrow. Let every Man among us, who is capable of bearing Arms, repair to the Spot nearest to his Home, and give up a Portion of his Time to learn the Use of them, and how best to annoy the Enemy with Success, who shall have dared to set his Foot on BRITISH GROUND. This is the Moment to give a bright Example to the World, as we have often done in Times past, by uniting as one Man for the Defence of our Families, and every Thing that is dear to us. Never was the Appeal so strong to BRITONS as at present. But strong as it is, never will our National Character shine forth with greater Strength and Energy. We will shew the World what they have never before seen—

## One Million of Free-Men in Arms!

resolved to defend their Country to the last drop of their Blood!—In such a Cause, SUCCESS WILL ATTEND OUR EXERTIONS.—And those who survive the Conflict, will be rewarded by a happy and joyful Old Age, and teach their Children, and their Children's Children, that all the Sacrifices they made of Time, Exertion, or Fatigue, are nothing compared to the Comforts they have thereby transmitted down to them, in having saved their Country, and all that was dear to them, from a cruel and bloody Tyrant. Bold and determined in our Conduct, let it be our unremitting Care to be Vigilant and Active at the present Moment, and shew FRANCE that justly as we Value our Navy, for its Vigilance and its Power, THE INHABITANTS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM ARE ONE AND ALL at their Posts ready, not only to meet them on BRITISH GROUND, but to avenge the Insult of any Army, however numerous it may be, that dares to land.

## Fellow Countrymen! Do not be deceived!!

It is only by being thus prepared to repel by Force of Arms every ATTACK that can be made upon us, that we are to look for a SECURE and HONOURABLE PEACE—Let the World see this, and she will be your Friends and Allies—Let FRANCE know this is your internal State, and she will compel BONAPARTE to seek for PEACE with you—You know the MAN against whom you have to contend—He has written his own perfidious and blasphemous Character in LETTERS OF BLOOD, in every Country where the deluded People have listened to his Promises—To compromise the Question between him and us, would be to SURRENDER OUR INDEPENDENCE and even our EXISTENCE AS A NATION—And shall this happen in our Days? Shall we give up what our Ancestors purchased with their Blood, and what has raised this Country to the highest Pitch of Greatness and Prosperity?—BANISH THE IDEA FROM OUR HEARTS—We will, by our UNWEARIED EXERTIONS, at this present important Moment, give the Lie to all the Lies which BONAPARTE published, even during the short Period we were at Peace with him, and which, in Fact, were all hatched from this one impudent and insulting Menace, that "WE DARED NOT CONTEND AGAINST FRANCE SINGLE HANDED."

*Away with such FRENCH Bombast!—We not only dare to CONTEND,*

## But we Dare to Conquer!

London: Printed for J. HATCHARD, No. 190, PICCADILLY.—Price 6d. per Dozen. [J. BRETTILL, Printer.

## BRITONS TO ARMS POSTER, ABOUT 1803

REFERENCE: | SUGGESTED AGE GROUPS: LIFELONG LEARNERS | MILITARY HISTORY, ANGLO-FRENCH WARS, FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS, PROPAGANDA

This poster or public notice is undated but was probably produced about 1803. Napoleon Bonaparte (Napoleon I) was a French military general who in 1804 became the first Emperor of France as a consequence of the French Revolution.

In 1802 Britain and France signed the Treaty of Amiens. This brought to an end the French Revolutionary Wars (1792-1802), a series of conflicts across Europe that France fought against Britain and other European states.

Peace was short-lived. In 1803 Britain declared war on France and Napoleon assembled an invasion fleet against Britain. There was a great fear of invasion amongst the population and this poster is a call to arms and declaration of intent of the male populace to defend the country against the French.

The poster makes references to two alleged insults against the British made by Napoleon – that Britain was a nation of shopkeepers, and that the British were ‘too fond of our Ease to engage in the Hardship’s of a Soldier’s Life...’. The reference to shopkeepers suggested that Britain was a commercial nation rather



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than a military one. Britain's military power at this time lay with the Royal Navy. During the periods of the French Revolutionary Wars (1793-1802) and the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) the power of the Royal Navy was at its height and exceeded that of other European nations.

The poster shows us how fearful of a French invasion the British population was and their resolve to counteract it claiming that one million men were ready to take up arms. The population of Britain in 1801 was 10.5 million people. Reference is made to the Corsican usurper – Napoleon was born in Corsica in 1769. The poster is an attack upon Napoleon personally rather than the French as a nation.

The production of posters and handbills was an important method of circulating information in the 18th and 19th centuries. Newspapers were expensive and taxed by the government. Posters, public notes and handbills could be produced and circulated cheaply and were therefore an effective form of communication.

The poster was printed for J. Hatchard, 190 Piccadilly, London. J. Hatchard was John Hatchard, who founded Hatchard's Bookshop at 190 Piccadilly in 1797. The shop continues today and is London's oldest bookshop, now based at 187 Piccadilly. The fact that the poster was printed in London suggests that it was largely circulated there. Local printers in the provinces would produce similar material for local circulation.

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## GLOSSARY

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Tar – the term Tar or Jack Tar was used to describe a sailor. The term is thought to derive from the fact that tar was used by sailors to pitch or waterproof the ship.

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## FURTHER READING

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NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

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*The Campaigns of Napoleon: The Mind and Method of History's Greatest Soldier* by David Chandler (Prentice Hall & IBD, 1973)

*Napoleon the Great* by Andrew Roberts (Penguin, 2015)

*Napoleon: Path to Power 1769-1799* by Philip Dwyer (Bloomsbury, 2008)

*Citizen Emperor: Napoleon in Power 1799-1815* by Philip Dwyer (Bloomsbury, 2014)

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## NAPOLEONIC WARS

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*The Napoleonic Wars 1803-1815* by David Gates (Modern Digital, 2011)

*The Napoleonic Wars: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* by Gregory Fremont-Barnes and Todd Fisher (Osprey Publishing, 2004)

*A Military History and Atlas of the Napoleonic Wars* by Vincent J. Esposito and John Elting (Greenhill Books, 1999)

*Britain Against Napoleon: The Organisation of Victory, 1793-1815* by Roger Knight (Penguin, 2015)

*In These Times: Living in Britain Through the Napoleonic Wars 1793-1815* by Jenny Uglow (Faber & Faber, 2015)

*The Napoleonic Empire* by Geoffrey Ellis (Bloomsbury Academic, 2003)

*The Napoleonic Wars: A Global History* by Alexander Mikaberidze (Oxford University Press, 2020)

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## TREATY OF AMIENS

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*The Amiens Truce: Britain and Bonaparte, 1801-1803* by John D. Grainger (Boydell & Brewer, 2004)

*The History of Europe from the Treaty of Amiens in 1802 to the Pacification of Paris in 1815* by Charles Coote (Arkose Press, 2015)



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*Amiens 1802: The Phoney Peace* by D. Johnson (History Today, vol. 52, no.9, 2002)

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## PROPAGANDA

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*The Genesis of Napoleonic Propaganda, 1796-1799* by W. Hanley (Columbia University Press, 2008)

*Napoleonic Propaganda* by Robert B. Holtman (Louisiana State University Press, 1951)

*Myth & Reality: A Review of Bonaparte and the British Prints and Propaganda in the age of Napoleon* by Jason D. Frost (National Identities, vol. 20 no.3, pp231-233, 2018)