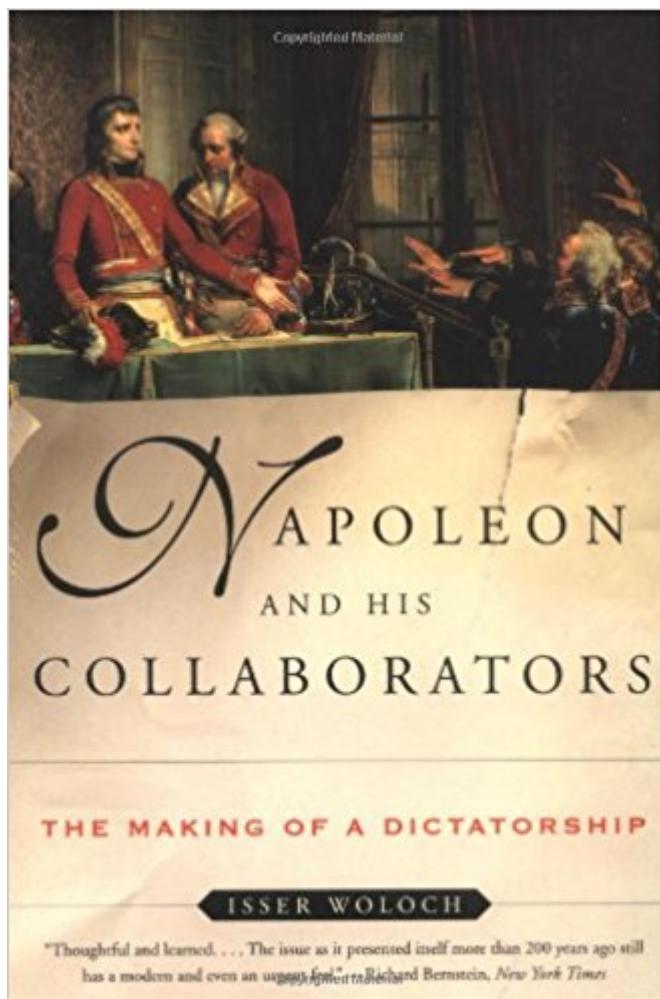


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# Napoleon And His Collaborators: The Making Of A Dictatorship



## **Synopsis**

A great historian explains how Napoleon forged a dictatorship and explores the dilemmas of collaboration, personal and political. The Eighteenth Brumaire, November 9, 1799: with France in political and economic turmoil, a group of disaffected politicians enlisted the talented general Napoleon Bonaparte to lead a coup d'etat and establish "confidence from below, authority from above." This is the story of how Napoleon managed his ascent from general of the Republic and first consul to dictator and conqueror of Europe. Napoleon did not vault into the imperial throne but moved toward dictatorship gradually; each assertion of new power came gilded with a veneer of legality and a rhetoric of commitment to the ideals of 1789. In this fashion Napoleon not only gained the upper hand over his partners of Brumaire but also retained their loyalty and services going forward. Far from shunting aside those collaborators, he put them to use in ways that satisfied their most emphatic needs: political security, material self-interest, social status, and the opportunity for high-level public service. 10 illustrations.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company (July 17, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393323412

ISBN-13: 978-0393323412

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #537,869 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #98 in Books > History > Military > Napoleonic Wars #347 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > France #1121 in Books > History > Europe > France

## **Customer Reviews**

In his rise to power from obscure provincial military officer to internationally renowned revolutionary firebrand, and thence to star-crossed dictator of the faltering French republic, Napoleon Bonaparte relied on the material and spiritual encouragement of many friends and allies. Yet, apart from a few exceptions, such as the shrewd politician Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand and the policeman Joseph Fouché, "Napoleon's prominent collaborators remain almost faceless men," writes Columbia University historian Isser Woloch. History has all but forgotten those who labored behind the scenes

to further Bonaparte's aims, whether out of true devotion to the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, or out of naked self-interest and personal ambition. Woloch's well-written book does much to amplify the historical record. Offering portraits of such men as the legislators Boulay de la Meurthe and Théophile Berlier and the state counselor J.-G. Lacuée, who worked to convert former opponents to the emperor's cause, Woloch sheds light on the rise of the French state bureaucracy, one that in many respects has endured to the present--and one that has tended to maintain a centrist position under regimes of left and right alike. Napoleon's remarkable accomplishments relied not only on a disciplined army, Woloch demonstrates, but also on committed and skillful political operatives--some of whom eventually came to oppose Napoleon's transformation from liberator to tyrant. Anyone with an interest in the Napoleonic era will find much of value in Woloch's pages. --Gregory McNamee --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The principal contention of this work by Columbia University historian Woloch (*The New Regime*) is that the nature of Napoleon's regime can best be seen by examining the careers of the men who supported him in his seizure and consolidation of power, and the author makes a good case in this interesting and informative book. The reader who tackles it, though, would be well advised to know a little something about the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era before beginning. Many have long held that the role of Napoleon and his empire in the revolution was to consolidate its gains and make impossible a return to the status quo of prerevolutionary France. The author shows in support of this idea that the men who backed the young Corsican general were by and large moderate revolutionaries who favored the ideals of 1789, but rejected the extreme democracy and the disorder of the Jacobin phase of the revolution. On the other hand, this book is full of fascinating details of just how the seizure of power and the resultant corruption of revolutionary ideals were accomplished. The supporters of Napoleon's coup found themselves in a moral dilemma, which the author explores through an analogous example of the men who supported the American war in Vietnam. In both cases, he believes, these men gave to their leader the loyalty that more properly was owed to their nation. (Feb.)Forecast: This title may see a boost in sales if displayed with Robert Asprey's *Rise of Napoleon* (Forecasts, Nov. 27, 2000).Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is an excellent book about how Napoleon and those around him rose to power. It is very in depth and took awhile to read but it was well worth it. I highly recommend it to those who want to

understand the Brumaire coup. Woolworth does an excellent job of taking the complex process and weaving together a very rich text that has interesting conclusions about the coup. If you are looking for a book that combines internal French politics with the society at the time this will give you a good sense of France. Highly recommended for those studying Napoleon and truly essential for any Napoleonic library.

Wonderful\*\*

The said book was arrived as described and on time.Thank you.

This book by Isser Woloch proves to be well researched and somewhat interesting. This book is basically a short political history of Napoleonic civil government from the coup of 18th Brumaire to Napoleon's final fall in 1815. Its reflective on how gradually Napoleon asserted his power and how diverse his civilian followers were and how well they served him. It was interesting to read how Napoleon was able to exploits his revolutionary followers and turned them into imperial servants. In some way, this is a short history of Napoleon's civilian leaders, who did much to aid his Empire as Napoleon's military leaders. This book does not provide a complete coverage of this subject. It reads very much as an introductory project and serves to provides incentive for interested readers to read more on the subject. I only had one major complaint about this book and maybe it just me but I found the book to be ill-written. While interested in the subject, the writing proves to be bit boring and dry. The narrative was for me a least, rather dreary in style. So while I enjoyed the information in the book, I didn't exactly enjoyed reading the book. However, since there isn't that many books on subject like this alone, I would have to recommended it for any Napoleonic library. The writing grind on you but ultimately an informative reading.

After the drama of the French Revolution, the study of French political history just sort of dissolves. Considering that one of the key goals of the men of Brumaire was to depoliticize French society, this can be considered to be a sign of their triumph. Woloch's useful book discusses how Napoleon set up a technocratic, conservative regime in which organs outside of Napoleon increasingly lost their independence. We have intelligent accounts of key figures like Cambaceres, Berlier and Boulay de la Meurthe. As Napoleon moves from conspirator to consul to first consul to counsel for life to Emperor, several themes emerge from this book. One cannot help but be reminded of the Animal Farm logic of the proceedings or recall how Hitler hoodwinked the conservative elite who levered

into power. Yet Woloch is too good a historian to invoke such a vulgar comparison. Napoleon in this account was conservative, vain, desirous of power and increasingly arbitrary in using it. But he was also hard-working (unlike Hitler), genuinely courageous, and infinitely less ideological than most dictators. He was contemptuous of public debate, but for most of his reign he would tolerate and listen to opposing advice, as long as it was tactfully presented and dealt with issues that he did not find absolutely vital (such as his own person). His police regime was one of harsh censorship, a muzzled press, and a system of "preventive detention." But the jury trial still survived, and his prison system was not especially vicious and bloodthirsty. Woloch devotes a whole chapter to the bureaucratic commissions who occasionally, but insufficiently, succeeded in mitigating the rigors of this system. His bureaucrats were generously compensated at the expense of Europe, but they were reasonably competent and efficient until the last few years. Another theme that comes up is that Napoleon was not a man of the left. The Coup of 18th Brumaire was directed against the neo-Jacobins, Napoleon consistently compromised with amenable royalists and emigres rather than with Jacobins and democrats. One of the key moves in establishing his power was the mass deportation of Jacobins after an assassination attempt in December 1800 which actually came from disgruntled royalists. He tried to flatter the old nobility, was thoroughly elitist and he avoided any attempt to bring the larger population into the political picture. The result was a regime where Napoleon appeared to possess unquestioned power, but which collapsed in the wake of military defeat. The result is a work that is thoroughly competent, if not very original. Compared to Woloch's first book on the post-Thermidor Jacobins, it does not so much fill a void as update our knowledge. More could have been said about the fragility of the society and about the larger social context of its support. The Napoleonic entourage was a rather grey lot, so there are few illuminating details. (Though there is the priceless account of how Cambaceres, now archchancellor of the empire, wrote in a panic to Napoleon asking him for approval to deport his troublesome old stepmother from Paris). Only does the last chapter really come to life. In particular, we see after Waterloo Napoleon forced to abdicate, and a commission of five parliamentarians meeting to consider what to do. It is heartbreaking to see the honorable, courageous Carnot betrayed by the opportunist Fouche as the Bourbons are invited back again. Carnot and other regicides are forced into exile, as well as Fouche by an ungrateful dynasty. Quite frankly, this isn't fair.

I found this to be an entertaining and well researched volume. Isser Woloch adds to his reputation as a Napoleonic scholar and master of his sources. In this volume, he makes a thorough examination of the transformation of an authoritarian but nevertheless limited consulship into the

empire of Napoleon; "the dictatorship that dare not speak its name". This volume also examines the lives of Napoleon's civil henchmen and the delicate question of how far loyalty to one's leader is loyalty to the state and to the nation. This is not a military history, but I recommend it to anyone whose interest in Napoleon extends past his role as war leader. Yours, James D. Gray

I think the French revolution was the first time a mature society was shaken to its foundations since the fall of the Roman republic. This book illustrates what happens when a cultural revolution occurs and in many ways explains the acts of the fascists and communists.

This is a book for someone who wants to know all the persons and events surrounding the rise of Napoleon. However, I found it very dry reading. It conveyed none of the suspense, excitement, or feeling that I had expected.

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