

Napoleon Addressing His Army in Italy

Soldiers:

You have in a fortnight won six victories, taken twenty-one standards, fifty-five pieces of artillery and conquered the richest part of Piedmont...Without any resources you have supplied all that was necessary. You have won battles without cannon, passed rivers without bridges, made forced marches without shoes, camped without brandy and often without bread...

But, soldiers, you have done nothing yet compared with what there still remains to do... Is there anyone among you whose courage is lacking? Is there anyone who would prefer to return across the summits of the Apennines and the Alps and bear patiently the disgrace of a slavish soldier? No, ...All of you are burning to extend the glory of the French people...

Friends, I am promising you this conquest, but there is one condition which you must swear to fulfill. That is to respect the peoples whom you deliver, and repress the horrible pillage which certain scoundrels, incited by our enemies, commit. Otherwise you will not be the deliverers of the people but their scourges...Your victories, your bravery, your success, the blood of your brothers who have died in battle-all will be lost, even honor and glory. As for me and the generals who have your confidence, we should blush to command an army without discipline and restraint...Anyone who engages in pillage will be shot without mercy.

Peoples of Italy, the French army comes to break your chains, the French people is the friend of all peoples. You may receive them with confidence. Your property, your religion, and your customs will be respected...We have no grudge except against tyrants who oppress you