

**Volume 1**

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**The Battle of Trafalgar - Part I**

**Lead: In the spring of 1805 Napoleon Bonaparte challenged British control of the seas. His scheme laid the foundation for his ultimate defeat.**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: If Napoleon Bonaparte was to control Europe, he had to destroy Britain and the French Emperor had not kept his intentions very secret. He was headed their way and so the British had stripped the southeastern counties of any supplies**

**Napoleon might use after the invasion, trained nearly half a million volunteers, and set up fortifications all along the coast, but the Frenchman reasoned that he could handle all that if he could just get across the channel. To cross the channel he had to eliminate the British fleet.**

**On paper Napoleon's plan appeared to be simple but in reality was very complicated. France had a fleet at Brest on the northwestern coast. They had one at Toulon in the Mediterranean and a few scattered minor squadrons such as that at Rochefort in west France, plus he could call on the navy of his Spanish allies. To bring all those ships together required great skill, nearly perfect**

**timing, and lots of good fortune. The scheme? His squadrons were to slip through the British blockade, escape across the Atlantic to the Caribbean, join up, and rush back across the Atlantic, converge on the channel and support the invasion flotilla staging at Boulogne just across the channel from Dover. Britain would be overwhelmed while its fleet was chasing madly around the Atlantic looking for missing French ships. It was quite a plan and it depended on the British being extraordinarily incompetent and counted on a level of experience in his own navy that was simply not there.**

**The Rochefort squadron got out and made it to the West Indies. The ships at Toulon did escape and set off**

**for the Caribbean. The fleet at Brest under timid leadership stayed where it was. Next time: Cape Trafalgar.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

**Resources**

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**<http://www.nelsonsnavy.co.uk/battle-of-traffic.html>**

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