

Napoleon was murdered with rat poison!

Paul Chamberlain, FINS

The great works and monuments that I have executed, and the code of Laws that I formed, will go down to the most distant ages, and future historians will avenge the wrongs done to me by my contemporaries.

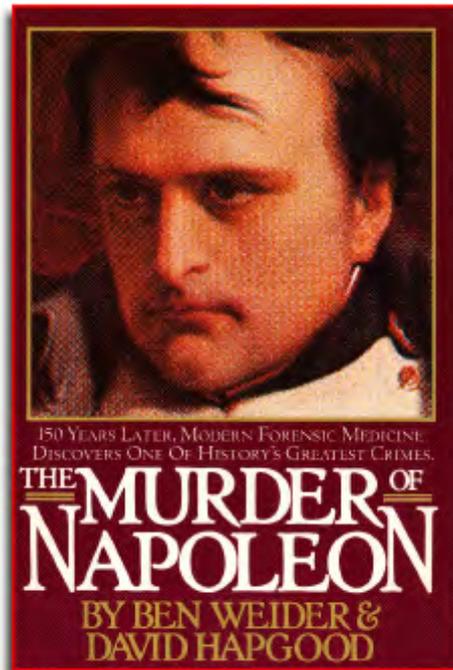
(Quote from Napoleon collected by Dr. B.E. O'Meara on Saint Helena)

The International Napoleonic Society under the presidency of Ben Weider has produced a fascinating report detailing some recent experiments confirming Napoleon was poisoned, and states what the poison actually was. Ben has spent his life gathering evidence that the Emperor was poisoned whilst on St. Helena, and has written a number of books explaining his theory and the evidence that supports it. His recent report entitled 'The Poisoning of Napoleon: The Toxic Agent was Rat Poison' details some further evidence to support this fact.

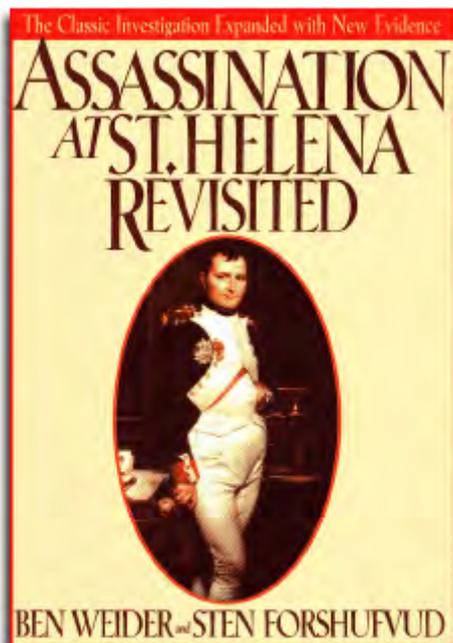
The story began in 1955 when Sten Forshufvud, a Swedish stomatologist, came across the memoirs of Marchand, Napoleon's valet on Saint Helena. Some of the symptoms described in this book led Forshufvud to postulate that Napoleon was poisoned with arsenic. To investigate this possibility, he obtained one of the Emperor's hairs from the former assistant curator of the museum of Malmaison, Commandant Henry Lachouque. The authenticity of this hair was guaranteed by the donor. The hair was sent to the University of Edinburgh's Forensic Medicine Department where neutron bombardment was used to reveal a strong arsenic content. Once these results became known, Forshufvud discovered that further samples were denied him in France. He had to go elsewhere for other strands of hair to analyse.

Other hair strands were obtained from Switzerland, Austria and New Jersey, accompanied by certificates of authenticity, these being confirmation of their provenance from Napoleon's contemporaries – Las Cases, Marchand etc. These strands were subjected to the same analysis and all contained levels of arsenic. By 1962 Forshufvud had published his findings in a book, posing the question 'Was Napoleon poisoned?' The notion that the Emperor was murdered in this way was savagely ridiculed by French historians, who totally dismissed the idea.

Ben Weider had developed a similar hypothesis about the poisoning of Napoleon and in 1972 both gentlemen met and decided to



combine their resources to investigate and promote the poisoning hypothesis. Using arsenic levels from strands of Napoleon's hair, plus documentary evidence from the people



who knew him on Saint Helena, they produced data to suggest that he was indeed poisoned and this was the cause of his death in 1821. They refuted the idea that he died of stomach cancer, obtaining expert opinions on this subject based upon the autopsy records made after the Emperor died.

In 1995 Ben submitted two hairs to the FBI's Chemistry/Toxicology Unit for analysis. These strands had been in the possession of Count Las Cases and obtained on Saint Helena. They were subjected to the 'Graphite Furnace Atomic Absorption Spectroscopy' and the results obtained substantiated those produced by the University of Edinburgh. Their report concluded that 'the quantity of arsenic present in the hair is consistent with arsenic poisoning'. Again, the French academic community greeted these claims with scorn and ridicule. They refused to accept the results of any such tests that had not been performed in France.

In September 2000, a selection of hairs was submitted to Doctor Pascal Kintz, a recognized authority in the field of toxicological hair analysis, at that time President of the French Analytical Toxicology Association. He worked in the ChemTox laboratory near Strasbourg. These five strands had belonged to Lady Holland, the Abbé Vignali, the servant Noverraz (this lock came from the Napoleon Museum in Arenenberg, an old Swiss residence of Queen Hortense in Thurgovie, Lake Constance), the valet Marchand and Las Cases. This was the first time that any laboratory had such a selection of hair samples with which to perform toxicological analysis.

The following year Doctor Kintz announced that the five hairs had an arsenic content that was higher than would be expected in an individual who had not received doses of arsenic.

This evidence was again ridiculed by the French academic community. A paper was published in the journal Science and Vie (November 2002) that dismissed the notion that Napoleon had been poisoned, basing their claim on an analysis of a lock of hair obtained



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from a source that could not be authenticated. Their dismissal was also based upon their view that the arsenic detected was not in, but on, Napoleon's hair, and thus its presence is due only to arsenic-based preservatives, not the ingestion of the poison.

This prompted Doctor Kintz to use a new analytical approach. The atomic absorption spectrophotometry method examined the entire hair, both the outer surface as well as the internal levels of chemicals. The new method (Nano-Secondary Ion Mass Spectrography) looked at the internal core, or medulla, of the hair. The result showed that arsenic was present inside the hair, and could only have got there from within the body. In other words, it was ingested.

Ben's work provides evidence that refutes the other theories as to how Napoleon acquired arsenic within his body. These include preservation of the hair since it was cut, wallpaper paste and smoke from the stove at

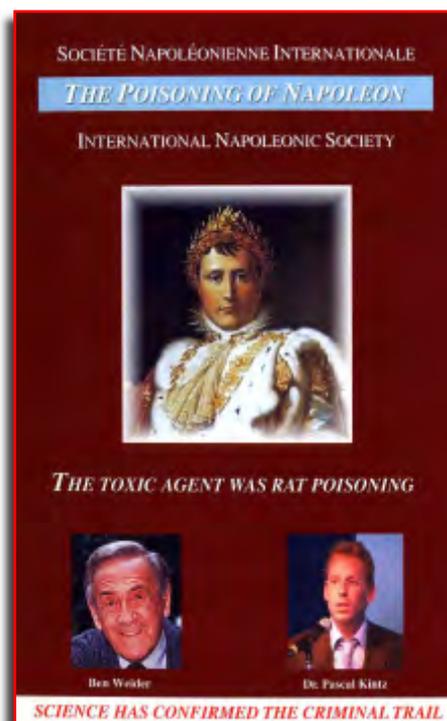
Longwood. One recent theory by some Swiss researchers is that Napoleon really succumbed to stomach cancer. They based their theory on measuring several pairs of his trousers, which had steadily reduced in size during his captivity on Saint Helena! As Doctor Kintz remarked, 'You don't decide that someone is suffering from cancer by measuring the size of his trousers!'

Ben and Doctor Kintz undertook further work on the hair strands using another method, Inductively Coupled Plasma-Mass Spectrometry (ICM-MS), to look for traces of a variety of chemicals in Napoleon's hair. The results confirmed the levels of arsenic, but also detected mercury (derived from calomel, a purgative), antimony (from tarter emetic), silver (a residue of collargol syrup, a local antiseptic), and lead (present in wine and port at that time). This methodology enabled the type of arsenic to be distinguished. There are two types, an organic form found in seafood, and mineral arsenic, a toxic form used in rat poison. It was this latter type that was found in the hair strands.

Ben's report discusses the possible sources of the arsenic in Napoleon's hair, ruling out preservatives of the hair since it was cut, smoke from the stove, the water on Saint Helena and the wallpaper in the rooms at Longwood. The final conclusion after the numerous experiments is that:

'In all the samples of the Emperor's hair, the ICM-MS identified massive concentrations that are consistent with chronic poisoning by very toxic mineral arsenic. This points to the unambiguous conclusion that we are dealing with a case of criminal poisoning.' (Doctor Pascal Kintz)

Ben Weider has spent much of his life examining the poisoning thesis and producing evidence to support the theory that Napoleon



was poisoned. This latest work provides convincing data to support this hypothesis. Alongside this quest for the truth of Napoleon's final years, Ben has generously supported many Napoleonic projects worldwide. To find out more about his work on Napoleon and the poisoning debate, visit the website of the International Napoleonic Society at www.napoleonicsociety.com. You will also find the following books of great interest and very thought-provoking:

The Murder of Napoleon by Ben Weider and David Hapgood (London, 1982)

Assassination at St. Helena Revisited by Ben Weider and Sten Forshufvud (John Wiley USA, 1995).