

= Honoré Théodore Maxime Gazan de la Peyrière =

Honoré Théodore Maxime Gazan de la Peyrière ( October 29 , 1764 ? April 9 , 1845 ) was a French general who fought in the French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars .

Gazan started his military career as a cannonier in the French Coast Guard . He was later appointed to the Royal Life Guards and , upon the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789 , he joined the French National Guard . After service in the Upper Rhine valley and the Netherlands , he joined André Masséna in Switzerland in 1799 , and fought at the battles of Winterthur and First Zurich . In August 1805 , Gazan commanded of a division of the Army that encircled the Austrians in Ulm . On November 11 , under Joseph Mortier , his division provided the advance guard in the advance on Vienna . Mortier over @-@ extended his line of march and Gazan 's division was surrounded by Kutuzov 's Coalition army ; Gazan lost 40 percent of his force in the Battle of Dürenstein . Following the Prussian defeat at the Battle of Jena @-@ Auerstadt , he transferred with Jean Lannes to the Iberian peninsula . There he participated in the French capture of Zaragoza and in several important actions of the long Peninsular War , including the Battle of Albuera and the Battle of Vitoria .

During the Hundred Days , Gazan eventually joined Napoleon 's cause , although he did not have a field command . In 1815 , he judged Michel Ney 's trial for treason , but refused to reach a verdict . He dabbled briefly , and unsuccessfully , in politics in the 1820s . In 1830 , He was raised to the French peerage and held a divisional command in Marsailles , but by then was an old man , and he retired in 1832 . He died in 1845 .

= = Family and early military career = =

Gazan was born in the small town of Grasse , in the Alpes @-@ Maritimes . His father , a lawyer , sent him to the College of Sorèze , where he received military training . Gazan was a second lieutenant in the Coast Guard cannoniers of Antibes at the age of fifteen . In 1786 , he was appointed to the Royal Life Guards , Company Écossaise . Afterward he also joined the Freemasons .

= = French Revolutionary Wars = =

At the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 , Gazan returned to Grasse and joined the National Guard . In 1790 , he became a captain and , in 1791 , a lieutenant colonel of the local volunteer battalion of the Var . In 1792 , with the declaration of war with Austria , he was sent to the 27th Regiment . His regiment first served garrison duty in Strasbourg , but in December 1793 , participated in the Battle of Wissembourg . In May 1794 , Gazan became a battalion commander of the new 54th Demi @-@ Brigade . On 4 July , he routed the Prussians in Kuppenheim by ordering his drummers to beat a charge , convincing the Prussians that they were outnumbered . He was promoted to brigade colonel on 11 July and led his troops to victory against the Prussians at Trippstadt .

In 1796 , he joined the Army of the Rhine , under the command of Jean Victor Moreau . This was his first campaign and he was promoted to brigadier general in recognition of his outstanding achievements at the Battle of Ettlingen . Gazan was wounded on 22 November 1796 and taken to hospital in Strasbourg for his recovery , where he met Marie Madeleine Reiss ; after their marriage , she frequently accompanied him on his campaigns and they had several children .

= = Swiss campaign = = =

On 4 April 1799 , his superior and friend André Masséna transferred him to the Army of the Danube , at that time located in the northeastern Swiss plateau . There , he took command of a weak ( under @-@ manned ) brigade at the small town of Winterthur , in northern Switzerland . On 26 May , Michel Ney , the newly appointed general of division , took command of the forward line protecting

the main French force at Zürich . The following day , Friedrich , Baron von Hotze , arrived with close to 8 @, @ 000 battle @-@ hardened and experienced Austrian border troops , including the 12th Infantry Manfredini , a battalion of Hungarian grenadiers , and six squadrons of the Waldeck Dragoons . In the ensuing clash , Ney ordered Gazan 's under @-@ manned brigade to the center , where it was soon overwhelmed . In retreat , they safely crossed a bridge spanning a small river , the Töss , but the cavalry guarding the bridge was itself forced back . After stationing his batteries on a slight incline , to protect the retreat from the Austrians , the injured Ney handed command to Gazan , who organized and conducted the successful retreat .

A few days later , at the First Battle of Zürich ( 4 June 1799 ) , the Austrian force overpowered the French lines . As part of the V. Division of the Army of the Danube , Gazan again commanded the rear guard after Masséna 's force disengaged from Archduke Charles ' army and withdrew across the Limmat river . Later that year , he faced a combined Austrian and Russian force at the Second Battle of Zürich ( 27 September ) . His division repulsed Russian outposts at the Limmat river . He subsequently participated in the wild pursuit of the Austrians , resulting in a decisive French victory . He was promoted to division commander and continued in the campaign against Coalition troops in Switzerland .

In 1800 , Gazan accompanied the Masséna 's Army of Italy , as a general of division in the Corps of Jean @-@ de @-@ Dieu Soult . The 1st Division included the Grenadiers Piedmontais , the 30th Legne ( light infantry ) , and portions of the 2nd , 3rd , and 78th Regiments Ligne ( line infantry ) , totaling approximately 4 @, @ 500 men . While Soult 's Corps campaigned in central northern Italy , Masséna was besieged in Genoa by an Austrian army of 24 @, @ 000 and a British naval squadron . Soult moved his Corps to the east to relieve Genoa . As part of Soult 's Corps , Gazan participated in the battle at Bocchetta ( 9 April ) , where he commanded the right wing , and again at the battle of Sassello ( 10 April ) . In both clashes , his division was outnumbered nearly three to one took heavy casualties French had heavy casualties . Later in the month , he participated in the clash at Voltri ( 18 April 1800 ) . To relieve Masséna at Genoa , Soult organized several assaults on strong Austrian positions around the city . At Monte Cretto ( 13 May 1800 ) , Gazan 's division and the first column of Soult 's main force ( approximately 5 @, @ 000 men ) , attacked a stronger Austrian position of 7 @, @ 000 , under command of Prince Hohenzollern . Soult was taken prisoner , General of Brigade Joseph Perrin was killed , and the cavalry commander , Jean @-@ Joseph Gauthier , was badly wounded . The defeat could be seen from the ramparts at Genoa and caused the French garrison 's morale to plummet ; many units were already near mutiny and food was scarce . Gazan , who had been wounded , took his troops to Lozano and joined Louis Gabriel Suchet . There he commanded a division of the Army of Italy and fought in a French victory at the battle in Pozzolo ( 25 December ) against the Austrians . He was appointed commander of the First Subdivision of the 27th Military Division in Piedmont . After the peace in 1801 , Gazan returned home , but shortly after his return , received a new assignment as commander of a brigade in northern Italy , where he stayed until the declaration of the First French Empire in 1804 .

= = Service during the Napoleonic Wars = =

= = = Dürrenstein and Jena = = =

In the War of the Third Coalition , Gazan initially was assigned as a division commander of Napoleon 's Grande Armée in Lille , in preparation for the planned invasion of England ; he remained there until the idea was abandoned . In August 1805 , Gazan commanded of a division of the army that encircled Austrians in Ulm . On November 11 , under Marshal Mortier , his division provided the advance guard in the march against Kutuzov 's army . As they advanced through a narrow Danube canyon , the division was isolated from the main force , near Dürrenstein . By the small village on the Danube , famous as the prison of Richard the Lionhearted at the end of the twelfth century , he and his division were trapped in a narrow canyon , attacked by a Russian force at his rear and more Russians at his front . Gazan 's division fought desperately for a harrowing day

and suffered 40 percent casualties . He and Mortier were finally rescued by the arrival of the VIII . Corps ' 1st Division , commanded by Pierre Dupont de l 'Étang , but only after the loss of nearly 4 @, @ 000 men . In addition , 47 officers and 895 men were captured , and he lost five guns , as well as the eagles of the 4th Infantry Regiment , and the eagle and guidon of the 4th Dragoons . As recognition of his conduct in " the immortal Battle of Dürenstein , " he received the Officers Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor and the survivors of his division was sent to Vienna to recuperate . When Austria sued for peace , Gazan 's division was sent to Würzburg in Bavaria , where it remained until Prussia declared war in October 1806 .

Gazan 's division fought in the French victory over Prussia at the Battle of Jena @-@ Auerstedt ( 14 October 1806 ) . At Ostrolenka ( 16 February 1807 ) , Gazan 's troops took three guns and two Russian colors . Otherwise , his troops stayed in their winter quarters . After the new peace treaty , Gazan 's troops were sent to Silesia to restore order . In 1808 , he was named Comte de la Peyrière .

= = = Early Peninsular War = = =

In October 1808 , now attached to the VI . Corps , Gazan went to Spain with Jean Lannes and arrived at Zaragoza in December . The city was under siege and defended by Spanish under José de Palafox . Lannes ordered an attack on 22 January 1809 to capture the city in street by street fighting ; when the French took a block , sappers tunneled under the houses and blew them up , which prevented Spanish street fighters from slipping into houses behind them . The method was effective but painstaking . Gazan 's assignment , to take the well @-@ fortified Jesus Convent . Palafox surrendered on 20 February . The VI . Corps occupied northern Aragon afterward .

In July 1810 , Gazan 's force guarded the valleys of Extremadura , near Alcantara . In September he fought against Spanish general La Romana . In January 1811 he crossed the Sierra Morena to guard the supply On 15 ? 21 March , his 2nd Division of the V. Corps besieged and captured the small fortified town of Campo Maior , in eastern Portugal . There they captured 50 guns and the 100 @-@ man Portuguese garrison . As General Latour @-@ Maubourg , four squadrons of dragoons and hussars and three battalions of the 100th Light Infantry moved the cannons to Badajoz the following week , a combined force of the 1st and 7th Portuguese Cavalry and the British 13th Light Dragoons , commanded by Brigadier General Robert Ballard Long , charged and scattered the French 26th Dragoons . In the melee , the drivers of the convoy were cut down , but instead of securing the convoy of guns , the British and Portuguese enthusiastically pursued the fleeing infantry for more than 11 kilometers ( 6 @. @ 8 mi ) ; meanwhile , the French sallied out of Badajoz , carefully avoiding the fleeing infantry and its pursuers , and recovered all but one of the guns .

At the Battle of Albuera ( 16 May 1811 ) , the " bloodiest battle of the Peninsular Campaign , " Gazan 's division was hammered by the British . The force , composed of two brigades of infantry , one of cavalry and 40 guns , were enveloped by the British on three sides . General of Division Girard 's 1st Division was also trapped . The fire @-@ fight wrought massive casualties , and the bodies were reportedly stacked three and four men high ; the distinction was in 360 French muskets in deep and narrow columns versus 2000 British flintlocks in a double line of infantry . Only a costly mistake by the British commander , Major General Colborne , prevented a worse disaster for the French . Colborne had deployed his infantry in the standard line , two men deep , and had prepared to fire close range volleys into the French flank . Recognizing the opportunity , Latour @-@ Marbourg 's 2nd Hussars and First Vistula Lancers ( a Polish unit ) to attack the British line before the infantry could form its defensive squares . The French cavalry wrought massive casualties on Colborne 's brigade . The 3rd ( East Kent ) Regiment of Foot ( " The Buffs " ) lost 643 of its 754 men at Albuera , most of them in the initial onslaught of French cavalry . The next two regiments in line lost over 500 men combined and Colborne 's brigade lost 1 @, @ 413 out of its 2 @, @ 166 men . Despite the mounted assault , however , the French 2nd Division suffered high casualties and lost five colors , a significant blow to its morale and pride . Gazan was wounded in the battle , and returned to Seville , where he was assigned to a staff position during his recovery .

= = = Gazan and the 1813 Peninsular War = = =

In June 1813 , Gazan was appointed commander of the Joseph Bonaparte 's Army of the South . Joseph had established a long defensive line on the heights of Puebla , with the Army of Portugal at the left flank , the Army of the Center , commanded by Jean @-@ Baptiste Drouet , Comte d 'Erlon and the Army of the South , at the southern flank . On 21 June , Generals Rowland Hill and Pablo Morillo moved toward the south end of the valley ; Gazan and d 'Erlon asked Jean @-@ Baptiste Jourdan for reinforcements , but the Corps ' commander was preoccupied with the possibility of an attack at the opposite flank , and sent none . In their own turn , D 'Erlon and Gazan could not agree on how to deal with the approaching threat . In the initial stages of battle , the Army of Portugal started to pull back . Realizing that his southern flank would not hold up in the face of Hill and Morillo , Joseph ordered Gazan to withdraw in ordered masses . Hill and Morillo attacked Gazan 's forces with such force that Gazan withdrew .

This was Gazan 's last field command . Gazan 's pre @-@ emptive withdrawal created a gap in French line , exposing D 'Erlon 's army in the center . D 'Erlon held his position as long as he could , but the line collapsed around him . Joseph 's planned orderly withdrawal turned into a rout . Gazan abandoned all his artillery . The Allies captured the entire supply convoy , all the baggage and took many prisoners , including Gazan 's wife and children , although they later managed to rejoin him . After losing their supply train , the plight of the French army was terrible . Gazan mentioned that general officers and subordinates alike " were reduced to the clothes on their backs and most of them were barefoot , " but the rank and file of the army also suffered enormously from hunger , exposure , and disease . When Soult took command of the new Army of the Pyrenees , Gazan became his chief of staff until Napoleon 's abdication .

= = Napoleon 's return and later life = =

During the Hundred Days , Gazan hesitated but eventually joined Napoleon , with little enthusiasm and he did not receive a field command . After the war , Jean @-@ Baptiste Jourdan persuaded Gazan to be part of the Conseil convened on 9 November 1815 to try Michel Ney for treason . Despite his oath of allegiance to the restored monarchy , the loyal Ney had rallied to Napoleon 's banner immediately upon his landing in southern France and had led a corps into battle at Waterloo . The King wished to make a point to Napoleon 's former marshals and Ney became the focus of his wrath . Gazan 's relationship with Ney had begun in the French Revolutionary Wars shortly after Ney 's promotion to general of division . At the Battle of Winterthur ( 1799 ) , he had been one of Ney 's first brigade commanders . Although the King 's government may have expected the Conseil to find Ney guilty , the members voted 5 ? 2 to declare themselves incapable of reaching a verdict , and deferred the case to the Chamber of Peers .

Some historians maintain that that Ney 's death penalty resulted from the military court 's refusal to act in the case ; only the military court could have returned a verdict of " guilty under exceptional circumstances . " Such a verdict would have meant Ney 's lifelong incarceration , but would not have required his execution . When the military court refused to reach a verdict , Ney 's case went to the Chamber of Peers , which was populated by a mix of old and new peers . The old peers might not have been receptive to Ney 's predicament ; he had been , after all , a highly visible party to Napoleon 's success throughout Europe . If some of the new peers were sympathetic to Ney 's situation , they may also have been anxious to prove their own loyalty to the new regime . Ney 's penalty was a foregone conclusion .

Despite this , or perhaps because of it , Louis XVIII forced Gazan into retirement in Grasse , where the aging general dabbled unsuccessfully in politics . After the 1830 revolution , the new King of the French Louis Philippe made Gazan a peer of France , and he received a command of a military division in Marseille . By this time , he was an old man , and in poor health , and he retired in June 1832 . Gazan de la Peyrière died in Grasse on 9 April 1845 .