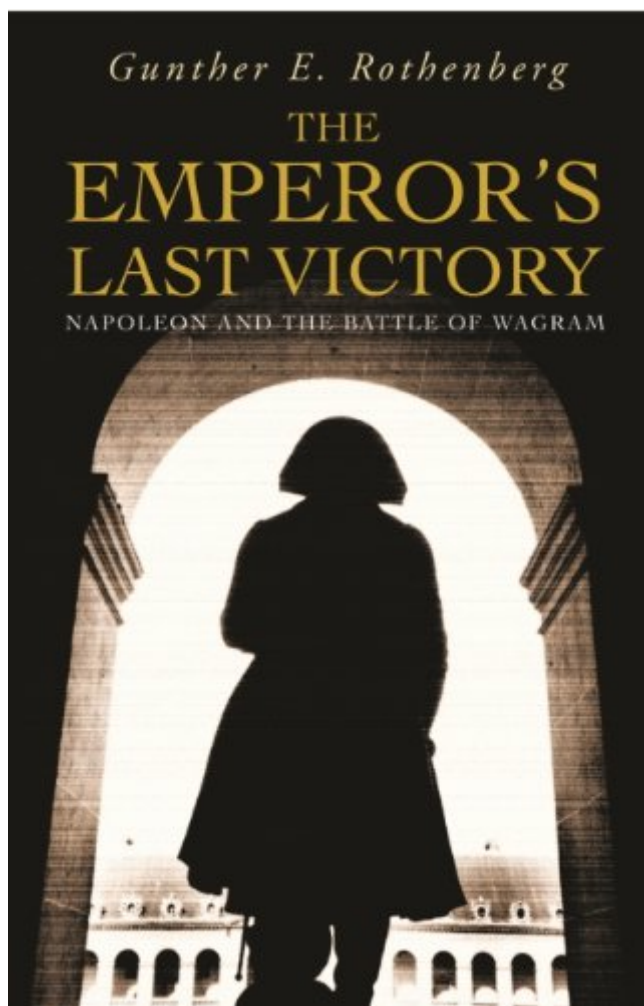


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The Emperor's Last Victory: Napoleon And The Battle Of Wagram



Synopsis

A leading expert examines one of Napoleon's most decisive but least analysed victories. In early July 1809 Napoleon crossed the Danube with 187,000 men to confront the Austrian Archduke Charles and an army of 145,000 men. The fighting that followed dwarfed in intensity and scale any previous Napoleonic battlefield, perhaps any in history: casualties on each side were over 30,000. The Austrians fought with great determination, but eventually the Emperor won a narrow victory. Wagram was decisive in that it compelled Austria to make peace. It also heralded a new, altogether greater order of warfare, anticipating the massed manpower and weight of fire deployed much later in the battles of the American Civil War and then at Verdun and on the Somme.

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Customer Reviews

This is a serviceable version of Napoleon's last major victory--at Wagram, as he defeated the Austrian Army under Archduke Charles. The battle was a monster of its kind, with a huge number of soldiers involved. 300,000 troops fought over a 2 day period; there were about 72,000 casualties (killed, wounded, missing, prisoners), with each side suffering about equally. As the book concludes: "The year after Wagram, Napoleon still looked unbeatable, but Wagram was to be his last decisive

victory, the last to break the enemy's will to resist."The book itself traces the Wagram campaign from its early origins. It describes how Napoleon created an army by shuffling a variety of units, some scattered hither and yon. It also describes the Austrian forces, under the leadership of Archduke Charles. The maneuvering before the battles itself is described. Indeed, the lead up to Wagram was most propitious for the Austrian forces. In a battle at Aspern-Essling, Charles managed to bloody the French and experience a tactical victory. Unhappily for the Austrians, however, they did very little (such as fortification) after their modest victory. On the other hand, Napoleon redoubled his labors, brought some additional forces onto the field, and developed a typically ambitious plan of action. At the last instant, Charles decided that he must also show some initiative. Thus, both armies planned to attack the other at about the same time. However, the French generals were better, Napoleon hit his stride during the battle at Wagram, and the end result was a fairly convincing French victory. It was not Austerlitz, but it was a substantial win. Some useful features of the book: there are some decent maps at the beginning (while they could be better, they are serviceable); there is a nice section with short biographies of the major figures; the "order of battle" provides detailed information on the structure and leadership of the armies. The writing is not elegant, but it is serviceable. For a brief description of Napoleon's last big victory, this will serve. A final brief comment. The author died before this book was published, always a sad event.

So-so book about one of Napoleon's last victories.

Rothenberg is a master on Napoleon, and this is a hard to find book for Napoleonic enthusiasts!

A very descriptive view of this important battle, too often forgotten in the history of Napoleonic Wars. This battle has been obliterated in favour of Waterloo and Leipzig and is as interesting as both of them.

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