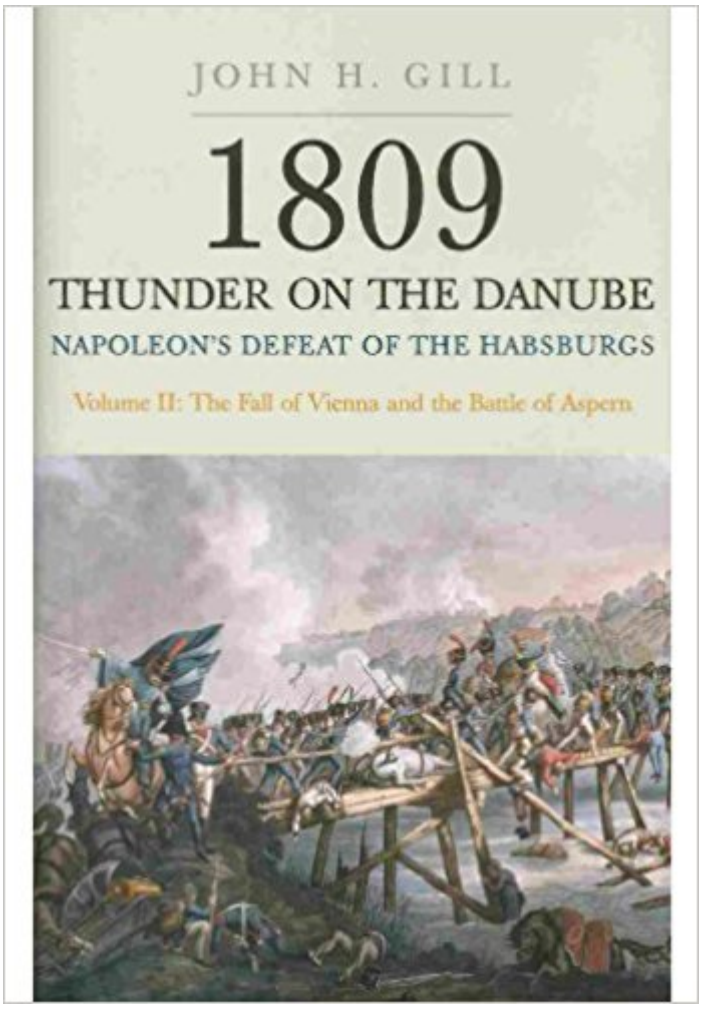
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1809: Thunder On The Danube - Napoleon's Defeat Of The Habsburgs, Vol. 2: The Fall Of Vienna And The Battle Of Aspern



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Synopsis

In the second volume of this epic work, John H. Gill traces Napoleon’s progress as he sought to complete his victory over the Habsburgs. The war had erupted on April 10th with Austria’s invasion of Germany and Italy. After just two weeks, Napoleon had battered the Habsburg Archduke Charles in a series of bruising defeats. This volume begins with a Napoleon astride the Danube at Regensburg. He faced a critical strategic choice - whether to pursue the injured Austrian main army into Bohemia or march directly for Vienna, the seat of Habsburg power. After electing to target Vienna, his troops defeated the Austrians in the brutal Battle of Ebelsberg, allowing him to enter the city on May 13th. But meanwhile, on the far side of the Danube, he suffered a dramatic loss at the grueling, two-day Battle of Aspern. While his Danube forces recovered from this setback, the Emperor cleared trouble from his strategic flanks. Gill describes in vivid detail the hopeful Habsburg invasion of Italy, led by the 27-year-old Archduke Johann, and the fierce French counter-offensive under Napoleon’s stepson, Eugene de Beauharnais (also aged 27). In a series of encounters across Italy, de Beauharnais rebounded from initial defeat to advance triumphantly into Austrian territory, shattering and scattering Johann’s army. In the wake of Aspern, while the Austrians vacillated, Napoleon gathered every man, horse and gun around Vienna, setting the stage for the gigantic spectacle of the Battle of Wagram, the final chapter in the story of the 1809 war.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Frankly, I couldn’t put this book down. The narrative is superb, and the reader is carried along eagerly awaiting to see what would happen on the next few pages. That a history book of a single

military campaign can do that is amazing. Although the author generally provided very good maps with which to follow the campaign, the ones up to crossing the Enns were not as detailed as I would like. But that was a small point when compared with most books about the Napoleonic campaigns. I particularly liked the author's development of the personalities on both sides and his presentation of their actions. Many of the battles could have gone badly for the French and their allies, but aggressive leadership and resolute fighting, particularly by the French, usually carried the day. One simply has to be impressed with the French elan and willingness to take heavy casualties. I cannot help but contrast that spirit shown here with the French performance in World War II and since. Everything about this book was high quality and even the orders of battle given in the appendixes were useful references. In particular, the casualty figures given by the author were extraordinary. At the twin battles of Aspern and Essling Napoleon suffered a casualty rate of 25% while the larger Austrian army incurred a rate of 24%. These numbers approximate the casualties at Gettysberg, yet the battles were not decisive. I cannot imagine an American army suffering 25% casualties in a two-day action today and not having the civilian population calling for an end to the war. And this was only for one battle during a campaign that was not even particularly noteworthy with respect to making an impact on the civilians in the warring states. In addition, casualties among generals and senior officers were appalling and reflected the penchant of French officers to lead from the front. Today, of course, it is different. "Stormin'" Norman Schwartzkopf led Desert Storm from the safety of his bunker like Fredendall did at Kassarine Pass, but fortunately the outcome was somewhat different. The campaign in Italy (Part II) was interesting, but somehow like an afterthought for completeness. I skipped through it rather lightly, more because of lesser interest than because of lesser coverage or any problems in the narrative. Unfortunately, the British interest in the Napoleonic Wars seems to center solely on Wellington's Peninsula Campaign and the single battle of Waterloo, while Americans seem to focus on the 1812 campaign against Russia. But there was much more than that, as this campaign of 1809 shows. Napoleon was the first person in modern times to seek a position of European hegemony (if one discounts Louis XIV), and would be followed by Hitler and Stalin before the construction of a supra-national elite to create and run the European Union. That he was able to come as close as he did is a remarkable testament to his officers and men. There is much to learn here. This is a very scholarly work written for both scholars and the average reader interested in the Napoleonic Wars. Highly recommend.

Col (Ret) John Gill has offered us the first part of a full treatment of the Austrian Campaign of 1809. The research is exhaustive with extensive and detailed footnotes containing many interesting

nuggets of information. The bibliography amply confirms his command of the historical resources. The maps are relatively small in size but adequate and numerous. This later is factor often ignored by military historians who do not realize how easily a reader becomes lost in troop movements and maneuvers without a visual reference. Col Gill understands the terrain and movement as a professional soldier and intelligence officer would. But best of all, his writing style is lively and interesting with a good blend of annecdotes to give context to what could otherwise become a long, tedious journey. The 1809 campaign was a pivotal moment in Napoleonic history and saw the first clear defeat of Napoleon on the battlefield. Yet, it has not received the attention it deserves - until now. If the rest of John Gill's 1809 trilogy are as good as this first volume, he will have produced the definitive treatment of the subject.

The second of 3 volumes that you cannot pass up if you enjoy Napoleonic warfare. It is the most detailed account of the 1809 campaign I have read. if you want to know what happened read all 3 volumes and John Gill's other book on the German allies.

tries to go into the nooks and crannies of the operations without slaughtering the reader on regimental details

Very satisfied with book and how quickly it was delivered.

A good treatment of the subject

This book and its 2 companions portray the history of this massive campaign from start to finish in exhaustive detail.

All three volumes of this series are excellent and a must have for the reader interested in the 1809 campaign. I highly recommend them

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