

(Get free) Napoleon's Great Adversary

Napoleon's Great Adversary

Gunther E. Rothenberg

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Gunther E. Rothenberg : Napoleon's Great Adversary before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Napoleon's Great Adversary:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great book about archduke CharlesBy CustomerCurrently at page 120, this book is so amazing. In some parts, it does provide some unnecessary details like the reformation of the Habsburg's army, which make the book become quite dry and hard to digest. Also, he jumps from this person to another one which kinda hard to track what he meant. For example: he mentions the rivalry between General Mayer and Count Grunne at page 104, who is Grunne? Then he explains in the next page that he was Charles's head of chancery. Quite confusing sometimes. Still, I like the way how the author express his opinions and evaluate the good and the bad facets of the archduke, not just "a typical national hero" at all. In addition, he expresses his opinions against some typical modern conceptions like Suvorov would win if he had to face Napoleon. "Suvorov's reputation rested on his victories over the poorly disciplined and rather backward forces of the Ottoman Empire and Poland, and at that was much inflated". All and all, worth the price and a great book for Napoleonic Wars' lovers. And one should also check the book "Principles of War: Archduke Charles von Hapsburg" in order to understand more clearer about the archduke's tactics and strategies (the author mentions this book at page 106). 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. "You were not at Wagram..."By Nicholas RobertsAustria has gotten a lot of clout from historians as being militarily incompetent or a weak hodgepodge of nationalities weakly held together. This is probably because there are not many English studies of the Austrian Empire. This book helps to fill in that gap. How could Austria, who was defeated four times, rise from the ashes again and again to eventually be instrumental in defeating Napoleon (of

put the effort she did in WWI)? Rothenberg helps us to answer this question as he exposes us to the Austrian military system and the reforms that Archduke Charles made to it. Charles was one of the greatest military minds during the Napoleonic Wars and earned the respect of Napoleon himself (Napoleon wanted Charles to command the Austrian contingent during the Russian Invasion). Yet there are very few if any studies on his military campaigns. The book mainly follows Charles' campaigns in Germany during the Revolutionary Wars but is very encompassing for the Napoleonic Era. Following the 1805 campaign, the book provides a chapter going into great detail describing the reforms Charles instituted for the Austrian High Command. Only opposition from his brother, Emperor Francis, prevented them from being fully implemented. Nevertheless Austria put perhaps her greatest show of military force against Napoleon in 1809. The army stayed in tact, defeated Napoleon once, nearly defeated him at Wagram, and gave the French a real bloody nose (Napoleon's forces probably suffered at least 100,000 killed and wounded in major battles alone, probably 75% of them being French. Wagram for instance had greater casualties than Borodino). Napoleon said it best when asked why he was making an alliance with Austria when they were washed up "You were not at Wagram..." The 1809 campaign is followed by a brief description of both the 1812 campaign and the 1813/1814 campaign. This book could have been three times as long easily. However this book still provides enormous amounts of information and is a must have for anyone into the Napoleonic Wars.

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. A Portrait of a Dynastic Army in Turmoil By R. A. Forczyk Napoleon's Great Adversary is a well-written military study of the evolution of the Austrian Army and the role of its best commander, the Archduke Charles, during the Napoleonic Wars from 1792-1814. Charles, brother of the Austrian emperor, saw his first combat in 1792 and rapidly rose to become the driving force behind the reform movement in the often-defeated Austrian army. The author, a veteran of both the British army and the US Air Force, is a distinguished scholar and expert on the Austrian military. Dr. Rothenberg brings the full weight of his scholarly research and military insights to provide one of the few English language accounts of the Austrian military in this key period. The book is organized in nine chapters which cover the Hapsburg monarchy and its army in 1792, the wars of the first and second coalitions, the first reform period in 1801-1805, the Ulm/Austerlitz campaigns of 1805, the second reform period of 1806-1809, the campaigns of 1809 and the final phase of the war in 1810-1814. There are 17 maps in this volume, mostly taken from other sources such as Scott Bowden. There are also 23 illustrations, mostly from the Vienna Army Museum, that depict uniforms and notable commanders. Unfortunately, the editors have not done the authors any favors and he notes this in his introduction. Given the dearth of works on this subject and the research effort made by the author, this is a shame. The author gives an excellent description of the condition, equipment, tactics and doctrine of the Austrian army at the outset of the Napoleonic Wars. However the description of Austrian military operations in 1792-1800 is overly succinct and focuses primarily on Charles' 1796 campaign in Germany. Napoleon's 1796-1797 campaign in Italy is covered in less than two pages and the Battle of Marengo in only one paragraph, with no new Austrian perspectives offered on either campaign. Instead, the author provides considerable detail on the reform programs pushed by Charles after the defeat at Marengo. These reforms were only partly accomplished when war broke out again in 1805, resulting in the catastrophes of Ulm and Austerlitz. Clearly the author's main interest is the period of reform that followed the defeat at Austerlitz and culminated in Austria's decision to re-enter the war in 1809. It was during this period that Charles, despite the suspicion and hostility of his brother's court, made his greatest contributions as War Minister and field commander. While not equal to the hard-hitting and fast-moving French armies, Charles was able to restore the Austrian army's cohesion and modestly improve its staying power. While he essentially bungled the outset of the 1809 campaign by failing to strike quickly at the dispersed French forces in Bavaria, Charles opted to retire behind the formidable Danube River and await Napoleon's attack. Napoleon soon obliged him with a reckless hasty assault across the river at Aspern-Essling, but a combination of Austrian tenacity and bad luck contributed to Napoleon's first battlefield defeat. The chagrined emperor, who had taken Austrian incompetence for granted, then realized that only a better-prepared offensive could succeed against the stout Austrian defense. Charles, although victorious, elected to do nothing and await the next attack. Napoleon's second crossing was successful and resulted in the bloodbath Battle of Wagram. This costly French victory taught Napoleon that Austrian armies were no longer the small, fragile forces that quickly retreated if their lines of communication were threatened, but were evolving into an attrition-oriented force. However, defeat at Wagram was the end of Charles' career and retired into relative obscurity thereafter. This account, while somewhat superficial in the early phases of the Napoleonic Wars, is graced with considerable data on Austrian forces. At times, Austrian leadership and tactics seem almost imbecilic and rigid to a fault. Even after the defeat at Wagram, Austrian reforms were reluctant to endorse open-order skirmishing tactics that the French had been using so successfully for the past 17 years. The Austrian army had some of the finest cavalry in Europe but wasted it by splitting it up in an infantry support role and using mounted units piece-meal, just as the French would later do with their armor in 1940. Good ideas, such as introducing all-arms corps formations, were negated by attempting to apply them in the chaos of mobilization. Nevertheless, the Austrian army continued to rise and fight again, even if it was a worn, threadbare force by 1814. Military reforms did not come easily to the hide-bound Hapsburg Empire as the author notes that, "the political and military leadership realized that radical innovations in the military sphere were linked to changes in government and society that neither party desired?" Basically the Hapsburg army remained a

dynastic force."

Although little studied today, this Austrian commander fought against Napoleon at the height of his power and came close to defeating him.