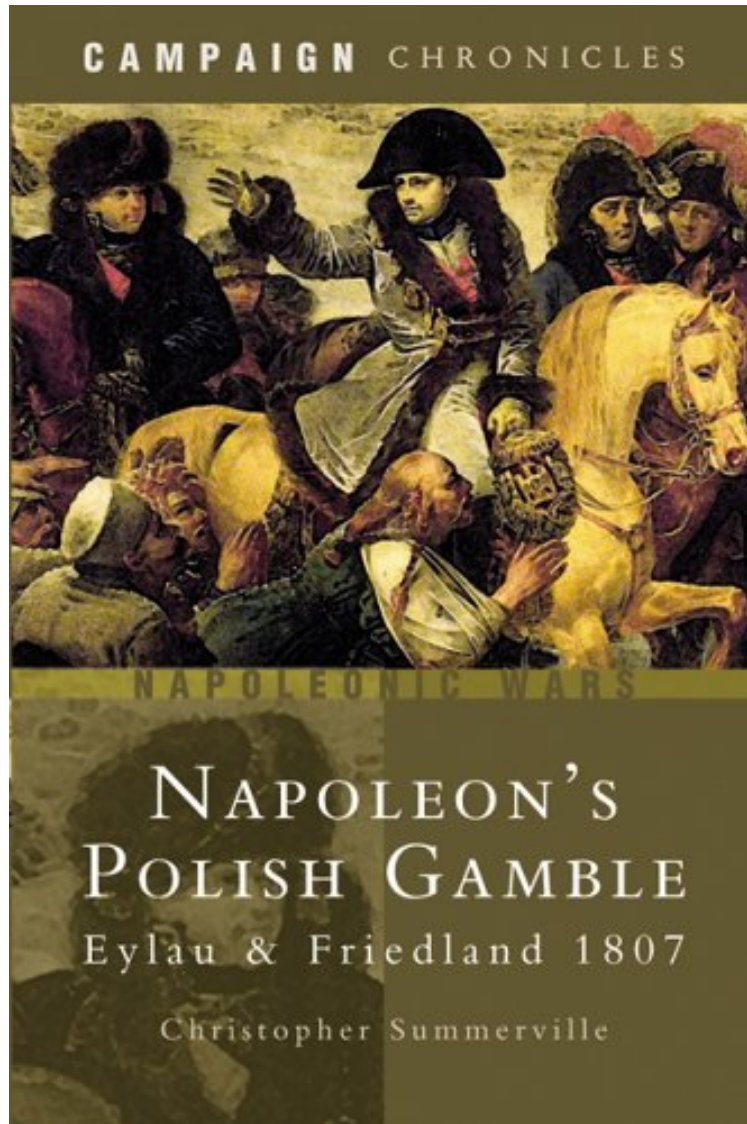


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Napoleon's Polish Gamble: Eylau and Friedland 1807 (Campaign Chronicles)

Christopher Summerville

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Christopher Summerville : Napoleon's Polish Gamble: Eylau and Friedland 1807 (Campaign Chronicles) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Napoleon's Polish Gamble: Eylau and Friedland 1807 (Campaign Chronicles):

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Disappointing, but readableBy Colin PlattLike the previous reviwer, I must start by stating that this book is a horrible disappointment to those with some background reading of

the Napoleonic wars. It seems that the author has done little more than condense Petre's book "Napoleon's Campaign in Poland 1806-1807", even to including Petre's map of the theatre of operations. I really cannot recall a historian who is so content to quote other historians! Virtually everyone mentioned in his Biography section has a thumbnail reference to Petre! Further, in the description, there is a reference to a "full and detailed order of battle". Forget it, the author quotes the sources he looked at, but then says it is not possible to arrive at an order of battle. Even if the author's reasoning is valid (and frankly, if Nafziger and Digby Smith can come up with orders of battle, and the author is so fond of quoting secondary sources, why can't he?) the description in , which I assume comes from the publishers is a lie. So, with all this, why am I not giving the book 1 star as the previous reviewer? Well, I am forced to acknowledge that the book IS easier to read than Petre's work. Petre wrote at the beginning of the 20th century, and his style appears rather dull now. This book is good for those who are new to Napoleonic warfare (and therefore would not have read Petre) and is a reasonable introduction to the campaign. But if you have read either Petre or Chandler's "Campaigns of Napoleon" this book is an utter waste of time.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. NO ORDER OF BATTLE, MAPS TOO SMALL, BATTLES NOT IN DEPTH. By DARONI WAS LOOKING FOR A GOOD HOUR BY HOUR COVERAGE OF THE BATTLES OF EYLAU AND FRIEDLAND 1807. BUT THE AUTHOR FAILED TO DELIVER. TOO GENERAL OF INFO.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A good read, but with a notable omission. By Avon Napoleonic Fellowship This book arrived at a perfect time. We were in the final stages of planning our game of the Battle of Eylau and had some gaps in the orders of battle, so I turned directly and excitedly to that section of the book. What a disappointment. Rather than a long and detailed list, I was greeted by the following statement "It is a feature of the 'Campaign Chronicles' series to give detailed orders of battle, where known. Such lists, illustrating the command structure of armies and unit strengths, are useful aids when attempting to understand or recreate a military action. But in the present volume, I feel unable to provide such a helpful piece of apparatus."

Christopher Summerville goes on to explain that, because it is difficult to settle on definitive orders of battle, he did not feel able to provide any. This seems a strange decision as all orders of battle from the Napoleonic Wars are subject to question. Surely they could have been provided with notes regarding sources and discrepancies? That major omission and disappointment aside, this is a useful book that crams much into its 168 pages. The book has three parts, introduction, chronicles and 'appendices' (by which I refer to the biographical notes and orders of battle... or lack of orders of battle). The introduction outlines the background to the campaign well, although there was a tendency to over-use direct quotes from secondary sources. The chronicles themselves form the heart of the book. They include numerous insights, interesting observations, and remarkable or moving accounts that are conveyed to the reader through quotes taken from memoirs of participants. Here Mr Summerville's prose is at its best, presenting a clear word picture of the campaign, the key movements and an assessment of the motivations of the key players. There is too little detail to form basis of wargames scenarios, but they present a fine summary of the events of the campaign. The 'appendices' contain a selection of interesting and useful information. There are biographical notes about the key personalities of the campaign, principally generals, including 15 French and 11 Russian and Prussian, a glossary of terms, list of place names in German with Polish, Lithuanian or Russian equivalents, bibliography and index. As already mentioned, the lack of orders of battle are a disappointing omission. The missing orders of battle are not the only disappointment that I had with this book. All of the maps are simple reproductions of maps from other works, such as Petre's "Napoleon's Campaign in Poland" and Wilson's "Brief Remarks on the Character and Composition of the Russian Army...", and are of varying quality, with many being unclear and of little help in identifying troop movements or dispositions. These disappointments are juxtaposed by the inclusion of the numerous 'sidebars' which add interesting 'asides' such as the history of the partitions of Poland, Benningsen's battle reports, a brief biography of Marie Walewska, accounts of the sieges in Pomerania and Silesia, the terms of the capitulation of Danzig and debate over the direction of the wind at Eylau. "Napoleon's Polish Gamble" is introduced as the "first extensive study of the campaign to be published for a century". While it is a fine summary and quick reference, it does not surpass Petre's classic account, and in fact leans too heavily on excerpts, reproduced maps and even the same eyewitness quotes from that ground-breaking work. It does not have the beautiful production characteristics and conversational text of a 'modern' account such as Hourtoulle's "From Eylau to Friedland". All in all though this is a good read, especially in this bicentennial of 1812, since the actions, results and experiences of this campaign were so much a foretaste and cause of the 1812 Russian campaign.

Napoleon's 1807 campaign against the Russians came close to being his first defeat. At Eylau the Emperor was outnumbered by the army of the Russian commander Bennigsen, yet he accepted battle. His reputation was saved by the flamboyant Murat, who led one of the greatest cavalry charges in history. Christopher Summerville's gripping account of this bitterly fought clash and of Napoleon's subsequent triumph at Friedland is the first extensive study of the campaign to be published for a century. The story is told in the concise, clear Campaign Chronicles format which records the action in vivid detail, day by day, hour by hour. Included are full orders of battle showing the chain of command and the fighting capabilities of the opposing armies.

About the Author Christopher Summerville is a leading authority on the Napoleonic Wars whose most recent work is his highly praised study of the Corunna campaign, *March of Death*. He has also edited new editions of Baron de Marbot memoirs and of Segur's classic history of Napoleon's 1812 campaign