



Napoleon Conquers Austria: The 1809 Campaign for Vienna

James R. Arnold

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Companion volume to Arnold's *Crisis on the Danube: Napoleon's Austrian Campaign of 1809*. 1995 Winner of the International Napoleonic Society Literary Award. From the Introduction: The sun rose on April 24, 1809 to illuminate a continent at war. From Poland to Spain some 600,000 soldiers awakened to duty. Rising to the bugle's call and the tap of the drum was a routine that the oldest veterans had performed nearly without pause for seventeen years. Yet the issues at stake remained huge. Therefore, national leaders - from emperor, kaiser, prime minister, and king to the rulers of the smallest German principalities - continued to send their young men to resolve by fire and sword intractable problems that defied alternative solution. The ensuing campaign witnessed another French triumph as Napoleon's warriors occupied Vienna. Then came a surprise when the Austrians repulsed Napoleon's impetuous assault across the Danube at the Battle of Aspern-Essling. Defeated, compelled to lick its wounds, the French army was vulnerable, its line of communications exposed to a Europe in revolt. At this moment of supreme crisis, Napoleon displayed his formidable talents and prepared a masterful counterstroke. His second assault crossing of the Danube yielded a terrible battle featuring a heretofore unprecedented concentration of strength and firepower. Consequently, Wagram cost both sides staggering losses, but Napoleon's commanding presence produced victory. It was a victory so complete that the emperor forced Austria into an unwilling alliance and even took the daughter of the Austrian kaiser to be his new wife and, for one final time, the French conqueror redrew the map of Europe.

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