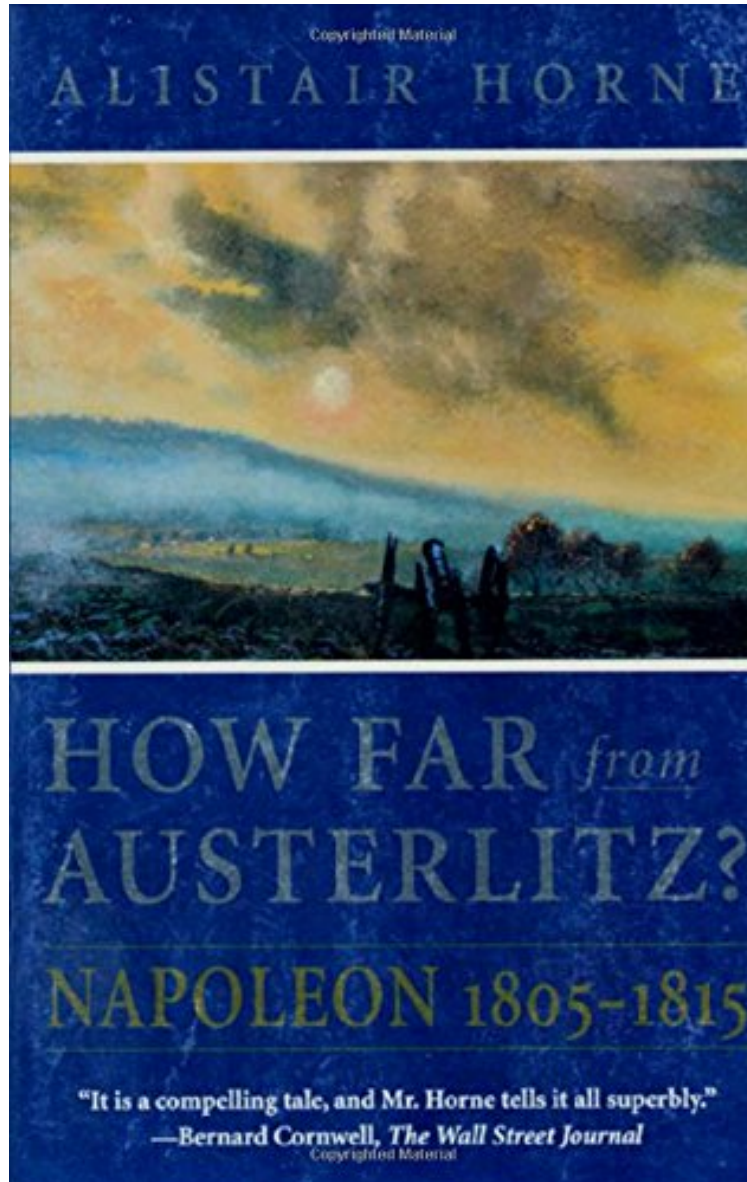


(Get free) How Far From Austerlitz?: Napoleon 1805-1815

How Far From Austerlitz?: Napoleon 1805-1815

Alistair Horne

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Alistair Horne : How Far From Austerlitz?: Napoleon 1805-1815 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised How Far From Austerlitz?: Napoleon 1805-1815:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Solid, but not Horne's best By T. Graczewski Let me begin by saying that I am a huge fan of Alistair Horne's, not that he needs my endorsement to cement his place in the front rank of historians produced in the twentieth century. Some of his works are literally the best historical narratives ever written,

such as "A Savage War of Peace" and "To Lose a Battle." That said, this is not the venerable Mr. Horne's most inspiring work. I found that the book suffered from a certain lack of focus and cogency. The purpose Mr. Horne gave for writing the book was to apply a fresh perspective as to how and why Napoleon and his Grande Armée could go from the dominance of Austerlitz to destruction at Waterloo in just under a decade. However, the reader may find that Horne often wanders from the stated objective set out for "How Far From Austerlitz?" as he provides detailed descriptions of major Napoleonic battles from Ulm to Jena and Moscow to Dresden. And the author is quick to compare and contrast the experience of the Napoleonic Wars to the Second World War, especially focusing on the similarities between Napoleon and Hitler. I enjoyed (but others might be irritated) by Horne's frequent historical analogies, such as likening the British expeditionary forces in Spain and at Waterloo to the British Expeditionary Forces of World War I and World War II, while the successful British retreat and evacuation from Corunna in 1808 is held up as comparable to Dunkirk. So what brought Napoleon from the heights of Austerlitz to the barren rock of St. Helena? Horne emphasizes three causes to Napoleon's ultimate defeat, although he never really lays them out cleanly and clearly. First, he gives more credit to the British economy for the defeat of Napoleon than the vaunted British Navy. He writes that British gold enabled England to better endure the effects of the Continental System and underwrote much of the seven coalitions that battled the French over twenty-three years. If, at any time, the British economy had collapsed, Horne suggests that the contest would have been over. Second, Horne accentuates the impact of the disastrous Russian campaign of 1812 and the inability to replace the estimated 180,000 horses lost in that epic retreat. Horne argues that the manpower and leadership losses were severe and certainly damaging, but were not necessarily catastrophic to the Napoleonic war machine. The loss of horses, on the other hand, was devastating. The horse supply could simply not be replaced and much of Napoleon's previous success, in Horne's opinion, had relied on the mobility, intelligence, and logistical advantage that horses gave to the Grand Armée. Third, and by far most important, is Horne's argument that Napoleon was a military giant and diplomatic pygmy. Thus, not surprisingly, Talleyrand figures prominently in this book. Horne suggests that had Napoleon listened to his master diplomat he may have achieved much of his ambitious dreams on the continent in the long run. The problem with Bonaparte's victories, Horne often claims, is that at first they were either too easy (Ulm) or too sweeping (Austerlitz), and then they were too hard and closely fought (Eylau and Friedland) to encourage accommodation with the defeated. When Talleyrand resigned after yet another victor's peace at Tilsit, Horne argues that the long train of Napoleon's defeat was ultimately set in motion. "Military supremacy and conquest cannot of themselves buy political success. If only Bonaparte had listened to Talleyrand..." Horne ends the book with a comment that is particularly intriguing given the state of world affairs in 2008 (although the book was published in a very different time - 1998). "Yet, if the prolonged struggle over Napoleonic hegemony has any lesson, or moral, useful to Britain [and presumably the United States] today, it is perhaps the value of coalitions. Muddled and inefficient as they may be, two world wars and a cold war show that, in the long run, they win wars - and possibly prevent them. Powers, however strong, that exist alone, isolated, are usually doomed." All told, this is a solid narrative of the Napoleonic campaigns of 1805 to 1815, but it could have benefited from less military history and a better articulation and defense of the author's thesis on Napoleon's fall, as that was what he claimed to strive for in the book in the preface.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Easy, flowing read. By Nicholas Roberts I enjoy the few books that I have read by this author and this one was not exception. Here he tells the whole story of Napoleon's part in the Napoleonic Wars while comparing it to more modern conflicts such as World War II. At first I was skeptical about all the comparisons as another reviewer stated, but I actually enjoyed most of them. As an American we do not hear many things about Napoleon and everything about World War II. Although I know much about Napoleon, I feel that the average reader does not. His comparisons to more contemporary events such as WWII allow the reader to grasp the significance of them. The only downside with the book is that it does not go into very much detail except when talking about the Battle of Austerlitz. This book could have easily been twice or even three times as long if the author went into greater detail. However overall this is a great book to either refresh your Napoleonic knowledge or if you want to learn about Napoleon for the first time. However if you are a knowledgeable Napoleonic enthusiast this book will not add much more than you already know. I would still recommend it however, it is worth the read.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Serviceable and readable history of the slow descent to the final defeat of Napoleon. By Steven Peterson This is an easy to read history of Napoleon's descent from the peak of his success, at the battle of Austerlitz, to his final defeat at Waterloo. The author notes a key lesson of such a study (page xxvi): ". . . it is the old repeated maxim of conquest leading only to further conquest; dictators and nations can win striking victories, but still lose wars--and the peace. Then follows the exhaustion, failure, or death of the dynamic leader, and everything collapses. Wellington understood. 'A conqueror, like a cannon ball,' he observed, 'must go on; if he rebounds, his career is over.' Napoleon and Hitler never perceived this. . . ." The book begins with a brief description of Napoleon's rise. Then, campaigns from 1805 to 1815 are described. A nice aspect of this book is a series of useful maps, to help make sense of the key battles over time. The procession of battles begins with major Napoleonic victories at Ulm and Austerlitz. The book does a nice job of explaining how the combination of Napoleon's skills and the skills of some of his key commanders simply was were too much for such inferior commanders as General Mack on the opposing side. Both battles were smashing victories

for the French, and may have represented the high water mark of their success on the battlefield. In 1805--the year of Ulm and Austerlitz--the naval battle at Trafalgar also occurred, and that forever ended any hope of victory at sea. There were other victories to come, but by the time of the win at Wagram (in 1809), these were becoming "hairsbreadth Harry" victories, where the French won but did not destroy the enemy--and led to heavy French casualties. Thereafter, the poor results for France in Spain and the disastrous result of the doomed Russian invasion foreshadowed the ultimate defeat of Napoleon. Leipzig in 1813 and Waterloo in 1815 ended the Napoleonic era. Overreach. As Horne notes (page 375): "Yet even if Waterloo had been won by Napoleon, it would almost certainly, in view of the overwhelming forces closing in on him, have been followed sooner or later by the ultimate defeat." A lesson that is difficult for major powers to learn. There comes a time when continued efforts at even greater triumphs may lead to ultimate defeat.

A London Sunday Times Book of the Year
A Daily Telegraph Book of the Year

.com In *How Far from Austerlitz?* accomplished military historian Alistair Horne covers the pivotal decade of Napoleon's career. Starting with the victories at Ulm and Austerlitz and concluding with the defeat at Waterloo, Horne treats his subject like the hero of a Greek tragedy, full of the hubris that ultimately will cause his downfall. He shows, for instance, that once the conquering begins, it can rarely stop. One victory demands a second to protect the gains of the first, and so on. Before long, resources are spread thin and the empire topples. That's essentially what happened to Napoleon, and Horne tells the tale well. In addition, he draws interesting parallels between the French emperor and Hitler: both were more or less confined to the European continent by British naval power, both launched a doomed invasion of Russia, and both had an fatal thirst for conquest. "The new volume shows Mr. Horne doing what he does best: writing lively, interesting, anecdote-enriched, and scholarly popular history. *How Far from Austerlitz?* is what popular history should be, fascinating and edifying, a rattling yet also sobering good story."--*The New York Times* "An engrossing work by a master historian."--William F. Buckley, Jr., *The National* "Concise and vivid...Mr. Horne's skill as a writer keeps the story fresh and intriguing."--*The Washington Times* "A delight."--*The Los Angeles Times* "Few military historians have given me more enjoyment than Alistair Horne; his newest book does not disappoint."--*The Military History Quarterly* (Editor's Choice)