

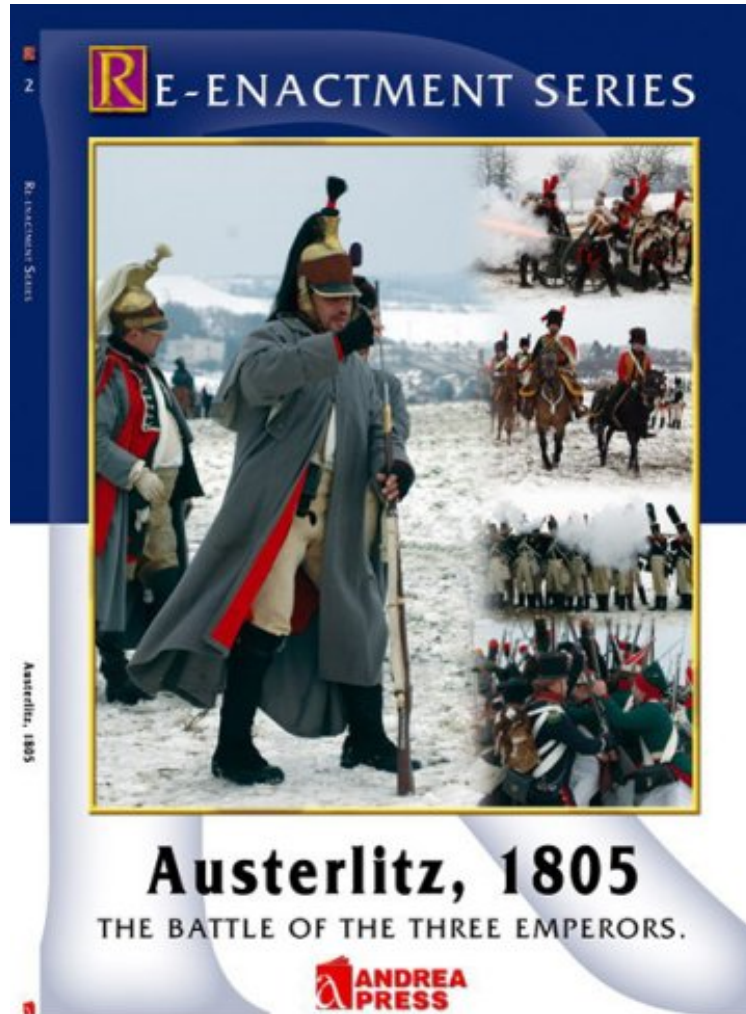
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Austerlitz, 1805: The Battle of the Three Emperors (Re-Enactment Series)

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The Battle of Austerlitz is considered by many as the most brilliant of all of Napoleons victories. It took place less than a month after the surrender of General Macks Austrian Army at Ulm. The Emperor had reconnoitered the field a few days before the battle, judging well where his enemies would place their troops; he predicted with great accuracy

their plans. The battle itself, on the 2nd of December 1805 is the height of Napoleon's military professionalism. It clearly shows how a plan, brilliantly simple in its offensive-defensive form, executed to perfection with the right maneuvers at the right moment can bring victory to the bold. Although he found himself in numerically inferior, he tempted his enemies into attacking him while he held a strong defensive position, and then, when his opponents had made the grave mistake of abandoning the high ground at the centre of the battlefield, Napoleon took his chance and counterattacked, dividing his enemies in two while still maintaining an adequate number of reserves to be able to influence the final outcome of the battle and then pursue his defeated enemies. The victorious outcome for France forced the Austrians to sue for peace and sign the Treaty of Pressburg on 26th December 1805, effectively bringing the Third Coalition to an end and taking Austria out of the Napoleonic Wars until 1809. Austerlitz is not only a great battle; we should also remember that it played an important part in the creation of the Napoleonic myth. The Napoleonic Legend, which he himself helped create, began in the days before this battle, by comparing the new Empire's rise to that of the rising sun that illuminated the battlefield where the Emperor achieved his impressive victory. The Victory at Austerlitz was won on the first anniversary of Napoleon's coronation as Emperor of the French, and established him as the first amongst the great military leaders in Europe. In Germany this battle is called Dreikaiserschlacht, or the Battle of Three Emperors. However, it was the Emperor of the French that outshone his Austrian and Russian rivals, both in military and in political terms. Though we ought not to forget that if Napoleon had shown as much diplomatic ability as he displayed for military affairs while on campaign, the battle of Austerlitz would not have taken place and the history of Europe would have been different. The bicentennial commemoration and re-enactment of the Battle of Austerlitz took place from the 2nd to the 4th December 2005. The organizers objective was to mark the anniversary of this event that brought in its wake so many political changes to Europe, as well as remember all those who died in the battle, be they soldiers from the opposing armies or the civilians who saw their villages burnt down during the battle. During these few days over 3,500 uniformed participants met in the Czech Republic to remember this historical event and all those who were present in 1805.