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Napoleon dominated nearly all of Europe by 1810, largely succeeding in his aim to reign over the civilized world. But Britain eluded him. To conquer the island nation, he needed Russia's Tsar Alexander's help. The Tsar refused, and Napoleon vowed to teach him a lesson by intimidation and force. The ensuing invasion of Russia, during the frigid winter of 1812, would mark the beginning of the end of Napoleon's empire.

Although his army captured Moscow after a brutal march deep into hostile territory, it was a hollow victory for the demoralized troops. Napoleon's men were eventually turned back, and their defeat was a momentous turning point in world affairs. Dramatic, insightful, and enormously absorbing, **Moscow 1812** is a masterful work of history.

Moscow 1812: Napoleon's Fatal March Details

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From Reader Review Moscow 1812: Napoleon's Fatal March for online ebook

K. says

DNF on page 295.

I'm going to be completely honest here: I bought this book approximately a million years ago solely because of the 1812 Overture. Yeah. I knew nothing about Napoleon's march on Moscow, but I knew and loved the 1812 Overture, so I figured I may as well learn the story behind it.

And going into a reread probably 8 years after I bought it, all I remembered was one disturbingly descriptive scene of how French soldiers ended up slicing bits off the officer's horses as they were walking along and eating them, and how it was so freaking cold that the horses didn't feel a thing.

On reread, I mostly found this...dull? Admittedly, military history isn't really my thing. I quite like NAVAL history, but military history? Meh.

This book is FULL of troop numbers and casualty numbers and how many horses died on a particular day (seriously, I think at least a million horses had died in horrible ways in the 295 pages that I read), and there's little illustrations of the troop movements in various battles. But because I wasn't finding it engaging reading, I found that I wasn't really following it.

There are a LOT of names dropped in here - you've got all the Russian officers and commanders, plus the Russian royal family. Then you've got the French officers and commanders and the French royal family. Then you've got Italian troops and German troops and Polish troops that got picked up along the way and all of THEIR officers and commanders.

So I wanted to find this completely fascinating. But I really really didn't.

Still, if you like military history and reading about a LOT of horses dying in horrible ways (like, there's way more description around how the horses died than how the men died), maybe you'll have a better experience with this than I did!

David says

Napoleon threw men around like toy soldiers and reading this remarkably compelling book you're left thinking what it was all about, so much waste and suffering. At the time he was considered a monster by many and a hero by many others, the 'world spirit' even, and I think it was only because he burst onto the old European scene of Royal dictatorships and shook the whole medieval edifice finally loose and became a hero to the likes of the Romantic poets and Beethoven (for a while) that he was considered great at the time, especially his own armies which he wasted so almost casually. He was obviously a complete egocentric and came to see himself in some sort of divine role, as they all do of course one way or another. I did learn something about the power politics of the time and was relieved of my illusion that Kutuzov was a master of strategy (Tolstoy) rather than an equally egocentric dissembler and even a coward in refusing to face the French and making sure all blame lay with others. And Alexander was more interested in gaining ground in

Europe than protecting 'Mother Russia' against the aggressor. As usual things are never black and white, and the Russian campaign laid the ground for the history of the twentieth century, world wars, the Cold War and much else besides. I suspect that it is the passage of time that has lent a sheen of romanticism to this chap. It was amazing reading about starving soldiers suffering from frostbite with bits falling off and putting up rearguard actions where it is almost incidentally mentioned that the French lost 25,000 men and the Russians 20,000, or that 150,000 horses died in a couple of days at the start of the campaign due to flash floods. The numbers leave you numb. Perhaps the greatness of Napoleon lies in the fact that he clearly didn't care about individual lives, only the outcomes of his battles and how things reflected on him. He was like Stalin and Hitler in that respect, and probably plenty of other charismatic 'leaders of men'. He didn't go in for genocide, but apart from that he's clearly another head case by modern standards. For once, the blurb on the front cover that claimed the book to be unputdownable was true, and I finished it in two days. Perhaps my own adolescent worship of the man, the times, the battles and my wargaming with school chums had something to do with it. It all came flooding back, as when I read a book about dinosaurs recently and was left wondering why I felt as extinct as the Allosaurus.

"My friend, the ages of the past
Are to us a book with seven seals,
And what you call the spirit of the past
Is at bottom only the spirit of those gentlemen
In whom the past is reflected. And honestly,
Most of the time it's a pitiful affair!
One look, and you leave; it's a junk heap,
A lumber room – a tragedy, all blood and thunder,
Stuffed full of fine sententious maxims."

Goethe, Faust

Dimitri says

The court-sanctioned art of Ingres and David, together with the unmistakably resplendent dress uniforms, have given Napoleonic campaigns a contemporary luster that continues to dazzle us two centuries on.

The 1812 invasion of Russia is gilded with an extra layer of pathos (in the demise of the *Grande Armée*) and patriotism (in the Tolstoyesque Russian historiography). Zamoyski strips some of it away through the drawings and engravings made *in situ*. Here the artillery crews push their caissons struggle through the mud, cacked up to the loins. His use of diaries and memoirs also reveal that deprivation was not confined to the retreat.

How it all came to pass after he charmed and hugged the youthful Tsar on that raft in the middle of the Neman River is murky. Napoleon himself later admitted that they had got themselves into the position of two blustering braggarts who, having no wish to actually fight each other, seek to frighten one another. *Si vis pacem para bellum* indeed. Perhaps it is best to see the Patriotic War as the direct escalation of a cold war between the main continental powers; most notably Dominic Lieven has marked the Napoleonic timeline with the date 1807-1814 for a reason*.

Despite a maximum effort to establish forward supply bases & tag along meat on the hoof, in the knowledge

that Russia was completely different from the densely populated and fertile German lands, the logistical demands of an army 400.000 strong (the exact number remains a point of contention) overburdened whatever measures were supposed to alleviate the meagre spoils of the land.

The crux of LOGISTICS centered on MOBILITY. Like all armies predating the internal combustion engine, it could only march and fight by virtue of the horse. Without cavalry, it was blind. Without wagons, it starved. Without cannon, it was emasculated. Napoleon's very timing of the campaign was tailored to the fact that horse fodder could not be transported in bulk. The best workaround was to provide the cavalry with sickles and let beast compete with man over the harvest.

Colonel Boulaert of the Guard artillery describes the pitiful conditions of the horses as early en route as East Prussia:

A cold start of the year meant that the harvest was late. We were obliged to cut the grass of the meadows [and] when there was none, reap corn, barley and oats which were only just sprouting. In doing so we both destroyed the harvest and prepared the death of our horses by giving them the worst possible nourishment for the forced marches and labour to which we were subjecting them day after day. Fed on unripe barley and oats, the horses blew up with colic and died in large numbers... my men would have to plunge their arms up the poor creatures' anuses up to the elbow in order to pull out rock-hard lumps of dung. Without such attentions their stomachs would blow up and explode.

The probing colonel may have possessed better skills regarding butchering, cooking and saddle sore relief than teenage recruits, but the march ration did not protect him from nutritional disease : 550 g of biscuit. 60 g of dried vegetables or 30 g of rice. 240 g of fresh meat or 200 g of salt beef and lard. To wash it down, a quarter liter of wine, a soda can's worth of 'medicinal' brandy and some vinegar in hot weather. He got creative to stave off dehydration ...

the excreta left behind by men and animals on the Russian side testified to a good state of health, while ours showed in the clearest way possible that the entire army, horses as well as men, was suffering from diarrhoea... how many times did I not throw myself down on my belly in the road drink out the horsetracks a liquid whose yellowish tinge makes my stomach heave today.

Another backwards echo of operation Barbarossa (1941): The summer campaign cancelled the need for tents.

The Borodino battlefield – its lethality in statistics unsurpassed until the Great War of the next century – is likewise laid bare and bloody. Looking at it within the wider context of the military campaign from the Russian side, it is striking how cautious the commanders were to preserve their armies to fight another day, against better odds. Did the Berezina crossing finally offer them?

Conversely, Napoleon is an eternal optimist; the fact that fair weather held until his retreat from Moscow was well under way had much to do with it. Hereafter, attrition by hypothermia or Cossack still didn't restore the balance between numbers and provisions: hunger haunted the French back to their starting points in Poland and into the Baltics.

The darkest shade of war, as usual, colours the civilian experience. Dead babies litter the retreat, from a starved and frozen trio in an abandoned peasant hut to a *cantinière* and her newborn that disappear in the icy river. Just as depressing is the fate of the French wounded left behind in hospitals along the route, dying from thirst and medical neglect on a bed of straw and maggots. On a bright note in veteran's recollections, one of

the pregnant camp followers' son made it to France and served under the colours in the 1820's.

Russia Against Napoleon: The Battle for Europe, 1807 to 1814 by Dominic Lieven

Brian says

Excellent book that provides the overall strategic situation that led to Napoleon's invasion of Russia and a careful examination of the choices he made and their impact. A nicely detailed look at the planning and logistics leading up to the invasion, the invasion campaign, and Napoleon's retreat. A nice mix of analysis, narrative and individual stories to provide insight and give a sense of experiencing this.

Flat out a good book, very authoritative.

'Aussie Rick' says

One of the better single volume accounts covering Napoleon's 1812 campaign.

Mieczysław Kasprzyk says

This book starts with a birth surrounded by all the pomp and power of an empire at its peak. in reality the book is about failure and indecision, about the useless sacrifice of thousands in a vain and pointless enterprise that somehow manages to sum up all that is wrong with man's ambition - in fact, Napoleon summed it all up when he coined his quip on reaching Warsaw, having abandoned his men; "From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step."

Watching the build-up to the Russian campaign is like watching a samurai preparing himself for ritual suicide... there is that sense of inevitability - that driving desire to destroy oneself. The "French" army is actually a massive coming together of forces throughout Europe; the courageous Italians, the various Germans, Austrians, Dutch, Belgians, Spaniards and, of course, the "largest non-French contingent... who numbered some 95,000", the Poles. Napoleon's arrogance towards and exploitation of his allies, his incompetence and dithering is astounding. His deception and abuse of his Polish allies, whose courage is constantly proven, is inexcusable!

The French were poorly equipped with out-of-date weaponry, poorly designed and uncomfortable uniforms and a genuine lack of logistical planning for a war to be held in an Eastern Europe that was a total contrast to the more "civilised" and comfortable conditions found in the West. "The troops (were) subjected to a rude awakening... there was an element of surprise at the exoticism and the backwardness of many of the areas east of the Oder. they marvelled at the emptiness of the landscape..." The roads were unsuitable, the villages were squalid, there was a lack of food and infrastructure that could "support" such large invading forces... even the fact that the troops had to bivouac in the field rather than be billeted in comfortable farmhouses and towns... all contributed to the great discomfort of the men and the failure of the campaign. Some of the mistakes made were so similar to Hitler's over a hundred years later... right down to the alienation of potential allies within Russian-occupied territory! "The Frenchmen came to remove our fetters," the peasants quipped, "but he took our boots too."

The Russians wore more comfortable uniforms and had superb artillery but Russian troops were conscripted for a period of twenty-five years - when they left their villages they were given a symbolic funeral since they were never expected to return. Their training and discipline was harsh and they did not lay down their arms;

"Frederick the Great is alleged to have said that one first had to kill the Russian soldier and then push him over." The real tragedy is that they were led by a gang of in-fighting incompetents that belong more in a school staffroom than on the field of battle. "Napoleon's military success in the past had rested on his capacity to make a quick appraisal of any situation and to act intelligently and decisively on its basis. Yet from the moment he set out on his (campaign) he displayed a marked inability... to act decisively...(He had) a difficulty in comprehending what his opponents were trying to achieve... The Russians had spent a year and a half deploying for an offensive, only to retreat the moment operations began. This... led Napoleon to expect a trap, and then to assume that they were avoiding battle out of fear of losing. He was not to know that most of it was the result of chaos and intrigue at Russian headquarters."

When the fighting begins cities are razed, the slaughter is immense. The agony of the wounded is heart-rending. One small fact jumped out at me - it concerned the battle of Borodino: "It had been the greatest massacre in recorded history, not to be surpassed until the first day of the Somme in 1916."

Perhaps the most surprising bit of the story is the march on Moscow. History (or is it romantic vision) concentrates on the horrors of the retreat of a failed army, in the freezing depths, harassed by Cossacks, under fire, starving. Yet the march to Moscow, in the blazing heat and rain, bitten by mosquitos and dying of hunger and thirst cost the French almost a third of their forces!

In the retreat, Napoleon's concern about his loss of face meant that suitable, life-saving action was not taken prior to and during the march back. In fact constantly we see not a great leader at the head of his men but a great vacillator, a man full of indecision, skulking in his carriage or hidden away in luxury whilst all about him struggle and die. When he did make decisions they were the wrong ones and had terrible consequences. His men "should have blamed Napoleon but did not because he belonged to them as much as they to him... His glory was their common property, and to diminish his reputation by denouncing him and turning away from him would have been to destroy the common fund of glory they had built over the years and which was their most prized possession."

What I really like about this sort of book is the way it tries to tell the story of the ordinary men. We hear (and see) individual tragedies played out on this cruel stage littered with frozen bodies and abandoned booty. The terrible cold, the lack of food, the conditions... even the lice... One shudders as one watches the growing indifference to the torment of their comrades, the desperate acts they became prey to simply in order to survive. My heart went out to them. Every time they thought they'd reached safety things just got worse. And the death toll was astounding! "...it is safe to say that all in all, between the Grande Armée's crossing of the Niemen at the end of June 1812 and the end of February 1813, about a million people died, fairly equally divided between the two sides."

Europe was changed. The Russian Campaign set the seeds for the setting up of autocratic structures throughout, and this in the face of the desires for greater freedom the man-in-the-street (especially the Russian exposed to the greater liberties of the West) expected. Russia and Prussia became dominant powers and it is no conceit to see in Napoleon's failure the sowing of the seeds of that greater conflict to come in 1939.

That I enjoyed this book should not need stating, that it is a good read is undeniable. Zamoyski writes with an ease that encompasses us and a knowledge that gives us material to bore our friends with for a long time to come. This is an epic tale told in an epic manner.

Anthony Ryan says

Fascinating and highly accessible account of Napoleon's most disastrous campaign. Zamoyski writes clear and compelling prose, mercifully free of any academic tedium, without allowing the vast scale of events to obscure the human element. Recommended for history buffs or anyone who wants to know why a very wise

man once said, 'Never get involved in a land war in Russia.'

Voss says

La prima parte, con il racconto di tutti i motivi che portarono all'invasione della Russia, è assurda, come tutte le storie di regni e nazioni e imperi.

Ma rimane realistica; così come la parte dell'invasione: con i generali russi che non sanno cosa fare, si fanno dispetti tra di loro e lo zar che non capisce cosa accade.

Come sempre, leggere di come fossero organizzate le armate dei secoli scorsi mi lascia basito: un lavoro immane, fatto con penna calamaio e carta e gente che correva da una nazione all'altra a cavallo impiegando tempi che ora sarebbero insopportabili.

Sono un amante dell'horror, sia su carta che in video, ma non ho mai provato l'orrore che ho provato leggendo la ritirata.

Tra il gelo e le sue conseguenze e il comportamento delle persone ... mai, mai ho sperimentato un tale raccapriccio.

Erik Edmunds says

This book provides an excellent and comprehensive account of all the complex factors that led to Napoleon's disastrous invasion of Russia in 1812. Like any good work of historical scholarship, the author starts with information detailing what set the stage for the invasion, and he then takes the reader in detail through the invasion itself, from the early French successes, to the wasted time in Moscow, to the miserable winter retreat across western Russia. What I found most impressive in this book was how Adam Zamoyski describes the suffering of the "little people," the soldiers and other men and women who were with the army. So often history is written only about the leaders and other luminaries, but a detailed exploration about what Napoleon's decisions meant for his soldiers and subjects, and also for the Russian soldiers and civilians in his army's path, can help us better appreciate this momentous invasion over 200 years ago.

Dirk Baranek says

Die durchweg chronologisch erzählte Geschichte eines Kriegszuges, den Napoleon mit katastrophalem Ergebnis von Paris nach Moskau und zurück führte. Eine Million Menschen verloren durch die Geschehnisse vom Juli 1812 bis Januar 1813 ihr Leben in Schlachten, Gefechten und Gemetzeln oder in den begleitenden Wirren und Schrecknissen, die 500.000 Soldaten in den Regionen auslösten, die sie durchquerten. Die meisten kamen in dem chaotischen Winterückzug um, als ein 100 Kilometer langer Zug aus ausgemergelten Soldaten und einem Tross von vielen tausend Zivilisten über vereiste Wege kroch. Dieser ganze Wahnsinn eines frühmodernen Krieges wird plastisch beschrieben, absolut quellenfest und teilweise brillant analysiert. Angereichert durch umfangreiche Primärquellen (Briefe oder Memoiren von Kriegsteilnehmern, Proklamationen, diplomatische Korrespondenz) werden die militärischen Operationen der Heereseinheiten genau beschrieben und alle Folgen der Truppenbewegungen auf Kriegsstrategie oder Zivilbevölkerung dargestellt. Es ist die detaillierte Geschichte eines furchterlichen Krieges, der Napoleons Ende aufgrund eigener strategischer Fehlentscheidungen einleitete und es war der bis dato schrecklichste Krieg seiner Zeit. Es musste zunächst die Industrialisierung des Krieges anbrechen, um noch größere Schrecken im ersten

Weltkrieg zu verbreiten.

Cathal Kenneally says

Sensational. Riveting historical report on a doomed campaign. The graphic descriptions of how the soldiers suffered on both sides. Heartbreaking stuff.

Like all great leaders Napoleon had his flaws but he blamed his mistakes on others around him. I have now procured a copy of a book about Napoleon as he is that interesting

Sotiris Karaiskos says

A very interesting and detailed narration of the events of Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812. The author uses historical sources but above all uses the narratives of those who lived through all these tragic events, thus giving a humanistic aspect to his book. Perhaps it sometimes overdone it, making some chapters somewhat tedious but most of the time these extracts contribute to the value of this book.

Aurélien Thomas says

'Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 was one of the most dramatic episodes in European history, an event of epic proportions, etched deeply in the popular imagination.'

And indeed, one just have to think about the battle of Borodino (*'the greatest massacre in recorded history, not to be surpassed until the first day of the Somme in 1916'*) or the crossing of the Berezina (*'a powerful symbol of the failure and tragedy that lie at the heart of the Napoleonic myth'*) to get an idea of how the Russian campaign was a tragedy on a massive scale, unheard of before!

Adam Zamoyski of course tells of the conduct of the war, from a baffling Russian retreat culminating in the burning of Moscow to Napoleon's blunders that will cost him so dear. Relying on first hand accounts (letters, diaries...) he also paints vibrant portraits of all those involved, and the gruesome ordeals they had to go through, as this was a war like no other and which will leave both sides scared for years to come.

What I found striking however, is his interpretation of the cause of the conflict. I am used to read about Napoleon being portrayed as the aggressor, and it's actually not quite the case here. The author doesn't hide his harsh and cynical view of the French Emperor:

'Napoleon was in large measure driven by nothing more complicated than the lust of power and domination over others.'

Yet, delving into the breach of the Continental System and, most importantly, the fate of Poland following the peace of Tilsit, one is here left with the impression that it was in fact the Tsar Alexander who, by his attitude, started the hostilities:

'(...) even as French society was looking forward to a golden age of peace, Russia was coming to see war with France as unavoidable, desirable even, while her ruler was entertaining dreams of his own for the

regeneration of Europe.'

Also interesting is how Adam Zamoyski shows the ambiguities of the Russian people towards the French - hailed on the one hand as the paragon of Enlightenment ideals yet, on the other, feared as a threat to the conservatism of an archaic feudal system. The impact on Russian society, the serfs especially, will be deeply felt:

'The majority of Russian society saw the events of 1812-1814 not as a spur to regeneration but as a divine vindication of the existing constitution of the Russian state, which alone had been deemed worthy by the Almighty of carrying out His will in the struggle against the evil of revolutionary and Napoleonic France. Abandoning his youthful liberalism, the Tsar himself espoused this view. There would be no more reforms, and the system became in some ways even more stultifying than before.'

I just regret the author didn't push more on that point (e.g. detailing the influence the campaign will have from the Decembrist coup of 1825 up to the Revolution of 1917). But that's being fussy! This book is indeed great as it is.

'1812' is not only a fascinating and harrowing account of a bizarre and terrible war, but also an interesting perspective on what ultimately caused it. Brilliant!

Liviu says

excellent account of Napoleon's defeat from a Polish perspective (and it shows as the "French" = in reality a coalition of troops from all over Europe including Italians, Germans, poles, Swiss, Spanish etc are bad, but the Russians worse, incompetent and scared by napoleon's reputation till the end and the Berezina final disaster when they had Napoleon and the remains of the Grand Armee for the taking and they let it got from fear of defeat- I read a ton of books on Napoleon including his memoirs, A Castelot famous biography, A Roberts' recent one (the first English language favorable one btw), also the recent Lieven Russia against napoleon (this one written by a descendant of high command Russian - German balt officer who was involved intimately in the war against Napoleon and it also shows as the Russians are heroes who planned the defeat etc) fiction, recently visited the Waterloo battlefield memorial etc etc - so I am quite familiar with the subject but still this book managed to bring vividly the reality of the disaster - it is graphic, explicit so may put people off with brutal scenes from various memoirs, but an invaluable book to understand both napoleon's dramatic fall and the realities of warfare in an unforgiving land

One of the big surprises of the book for me was in actually how much of the Grand Armee dissipated before the Moscow retreat - on the way in - as the going was fairly brutal too in a land with scarce food and long distances without towns; it's true that by Moscow, the Grand Armee was reduced to its veteran core and was an extremely formidable force still and only Napoleon's hesitation to leave Moscow for 2 fatal weeks led to the ultimate disaster as an earlier retreat would have allowed the army to crush any Russian opposition and reach and defend Smolensk and Minsk where they had supplies (the author argues cogently this and sounds quite plausible), but many factors (not least napoleon's hubris and belief that destiny will find a solution for him in the end as well as his precarious health as he had already entered his abrupt physical decline - speculated to be due to a failure of his pituitary gland which leads to obesity and low energy quite fast) contributed to this dramatic fall and ultimate disaster as by 1813 Napoleon's enemies got the courage to band together and bring him finally to bay while Waterloo was the final coda

the contrast between Napoleon in Germany 1811 attended by Emperor Francis, the King of Prussia and many other lesser kings, dukes, princes at his levee like a supreme ruler of the world, and the 1813 war of all of the above against him shows clearly how the title of the book is perfect

Overall - graphic and brutal but an invaluable book about Napoleon and his times told through historical narration and many original narratives from participants in the campaign of all kinds and from all countries; highly, highly recommended

Douglas says

Fabulous book! Everyone's heard of Napoleon's march to Moscow, but who's heard of the details? This book provides a wonderful exploration of the strategic and leadership successes and (mostly) failures that changed history, while clearly showing the depth and scale of human tragedy.

Walter Mendoza says

A work about of Napoleon's vast objective, the invasion of Russia. The author tell us about disaster campaign and the horrible events described for the soldiers. Zamoyski also analysed the political run up to the campaign, maybe not enough detail on battle strategy. Well described and researched, the author also made an excellent use of the first hand accounts of the soldiers and witness the suffering like cannibalism; the best part of the book is about of the retreat, well described for example the heroism of the pontoneers and the Berezina river's crossing. Definitely recommended.

David Nichols says

Deeply researched, richly detailed, and grim as can be. This is not a history for the faint of heart, nor for anyone who is fond of animals. But it's pretty close to a definitive account of Napoleon's worst mistake and gravest defeat.

Chris says

This book is like a train wreck. It's horrific but you can't look away. Napoleon's march to Russia was bleak, the battles poorly planned, the weather unbearable and the results all too true and verifiable. Brilliantly written.

Jeremy says

“From the sublime to the ridiculous it is only one step.”

This is a compelling story written well, with excellent pacing and balance between a variety of accounts and styles, combined with genuine historical discourse. He switches between French and Russian viewpoints effortlessly, and manages to draw out interest even in areas of monotony (French retreating and dying of the cold ... again ... again...) through focusing in on individuals and anecdotal personal accounts.

On the larger scale, frequent maps are provided and I found them extremely useful. As a preparation for reading War and Peace it has been excellent, really filling in the historical gaps for me.

It's also interesting to note that Napoleon's main issue with Britain was trying to force them into some kind of economic union with Europe ... to Breter, if you will. And, then, after Russia had finished with France, the State realised that they had trained and armed far too many serfs in their military efforts, and actually even tried a musket buy-back scheme in order to disarm the populace...

Miles Smith says

Zamoyski's books are always a literary and historical treat. Moscow 1812 is no exception. This is a brutal endurance-test as well as a necessary revision of certain historical presumptions, especially for the Anglophone world. Zamoyski pours cold water on the notion that Kutusov was a great general, one of the initial claims I found surprising. The narrative argues the point fairly persuasively. Zamoyski proves an absolutely expert at showing just how hubristic Napoleon was, and how his invasion of Russia was likely never to be successful.
