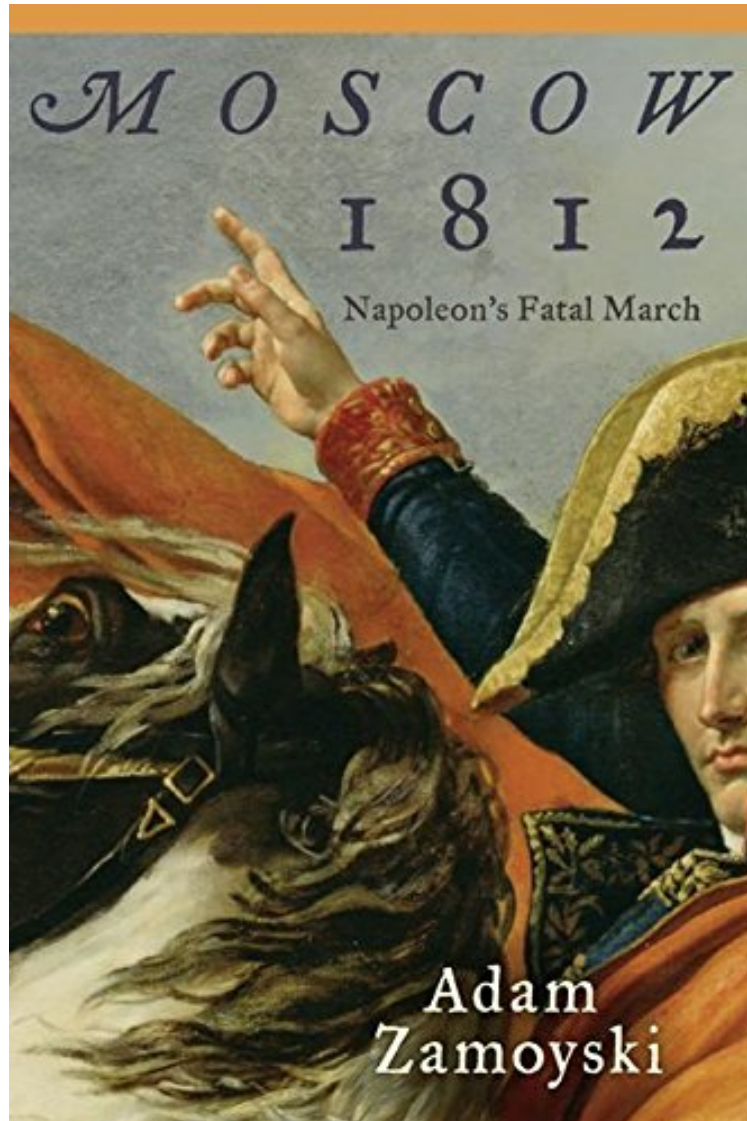


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## Moscow 1812: Napoleon's Fatal March

*Adam Zamoyski*

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**Adam Zamoyski : Moscow 1812: Napoleon's Fatal March** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Moscow 1812: Napoleon's Fatal March:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Horror Story Beyond ImaginingBy Vincent A. WilliamsZamoyski's treatise on Napoleon's ill-timed and disastrous invasion of Russia is a must-read for students of military history. But beyond that, it becomes a tale of hubris and pride perhaps unmatched in scale, which gathers momentum as the autumn of 1812 devolves into winter.The descriptions of the long march eastward and the accompanying battles are well-told. The reader begins to feel a sense of foreboding as the huge and unwieldy Grand

Armees fight its way toward Moscow and the summer drags on. When finally the French reach the city, they find it half-burned, with its expected stores of materiel and victuals badly depleted. Napoleon and his marshals are left with no other choice but to return to France. But they have waited too long, perhaps only by a few crucial weeks. The long retreat begins, and seemingly overnight, the Russian winter is upon them. The word "epic" is much-abused these days, but all other adjectives fail to describe the story of Napoleon's retreat. The huge French army, with an equally huge camp following, lurches into the teeth of "General Winter". Completely underfed and poorly equipped, the French and the long-suffering remnants of their long-suffering cavalry stock make their way back west. Only a fraction will complete the trek. The vast Russian countryside, which they plundered as they invaded, will yield almost nothing in the way of food or clothing; the French are reduced to wearing the dresses they packed as booty to bring to their wives back home. Thousands die each day, some freezing to death in their tracks, eating their poor horses and, in some cases, each other. Harried by mounted bands of Cossacks, which pick off stragglers as a pack of wolves might, and the Russian army itself, the Grand Armees is caught in a death-march, and for most, there will be no escape. Hyperbole is of no use in a tale like this. The sheer scale of suffering defies description. But this is a story that needs to be told, and Zamoyski is well up to the task; his writing is graceful and economical, and his attention to detail is superb. 30 of 35 people found the following review helpful. Debunks the myths and reveals the horror. By Ian Muldoon. With hundreds maybe thousands of books written about the events surrounding 1812 I have only read this one. And it is memorable in making clear that supply questions, sometimes of the most basic kind, can define the outcome of wars. For example Napoleon's inattention to replacing the 50 year old Gribeauval gun and gun carriage or badly designed uniforms which look good on parade but which are difficult, restricting and irritating on a march. The problem of feeding hundreds of thousands of horses. In addition Mr Zamoyski makes clear the effects of the Grand Armees on the move, like a giant centipede, never moving uniformly, parts bunched up, parts dragging behind. The husbandry of resources, the effects of the cold, the black comedy of Napoleon having to slide down a frozen hill on his arse, the hundreds of details that give life to this amazing tale. On the Russian side, the interpersonal squabbling of the major protagonists is astonishing where personalities and the lack of dedication to a common cause or agreement on strategy, was farcical. Simple maps make the major battles clear to the reader. Mr Zamoyski also makes clear that even in the face of the most appalling misadventures, blunders, or losses of the most tragic kind, the populace will believe what it wants to believe and with sheer weight of personality, some, like Napoleon, can survive the truth. With a combination of an overall grasp of the war, with rivetting attention to detail and the suffering and experiences of the ordinary soldier, this is a good read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Highly recommended great history book. By Kindle Customer. Great history book about this war. I highly recommend it.

Napoleon's invasion of Russia and his ensuing terrible retreat from Moscow played out as military epic and human tragedy on a colossal scale -- history's first example of total war. The story begins in 1811, when Napoleon dominated nearly all of Europe, succeeding in his aim to reign over the civilized world like a modern-day Charlemagne. Part of his bid for supremacy involved destroying Britain through a continental blockade, but the plan was stymied when Russia's Tsar Alexander refused to comply. So he set out to teach the Tsar a lesson by intimidation and force. What followed was a deadly battle that would change the fate of modern Europe. By invading Russia in 1812, Napoleon was upping the ante as never before. Once he sent his vast army eastward, there was no turning back: he was sucked farther and farther into the one territory he could not conquer. Trudging through a brutal climate in hostile lands, his men marched on toward distant Moscow. But this only galvanized the Russians, who finally made a stand at the gates of the city. The ensuing outbreak was a slaughter the likes of which would not be seen again until the first day of the Somme more than a century later. What remained of Napoleon's army now had to endure a miserable retreat across the wintry wastes of Russia, while his enemies aligned against him. This turned out to be a momentous turning point: not only the beginning of the end for Napoleon's empire, but the rise of Russia's influence in world affairs. It also gave birth to Napoleon's superhuman legend -- the myth of greatness in failure that would inspire the Romantic poets as well as future leaders to defy fate as he had done. In this gripping, authoritative account, Adam Zamoyski has drawn on the latest Russian research, as well as a vast pool of firsthand accounts in French, Russian, German, Polish, and Italian, to paint a vivid picture of the experiences of soldiers and civilians on both sides of the conflict. He shows how the relationship between Napoleon and Tsar Alexander came to distort their alliance and bring about a war that neither man wanted. Dramatic, insightful, and enormously absorbing, *Moscow 1812* is a masterful work of history.

From Publishers Weekly. This massive study of Napoleon's famous Russian campaign may rank as the best recent study in English. Napoleon's exclusion of English trade from the Continent and Czar Alexander's territorial ambitions in Central Europe were just two elements in a collision that really did have an epic quality, to which the book's painstaking detail, balanced judgments, thoroughness of research and fluent writing do full justice. Napoleon, Alexander and their entourages are fully characterized, as are crafty Kutuzov, dashing Murat (who ruined the French cavalry) and the indomitable or inept of lesser rank. The outcome, Zamoyski shows, turned on logistics, with the French advancing inexorably farther from their bases, and strategy, in which Napoleon failed either to destroy the

Russian army in a single campaign or to accept a limited victory in the first year and renew the campaign in 1813. The result was the retreat from Moscow, and the author spares none of the harrowing details of cold, storm, starvation and the vigorous efforts of the Russians to turn defeat into disaster. Napoleon and his Grand Army were still formidable foes, as at the crossing of the Berezina, but discipline was breaking down, supplies had almost vanished and the doom of Napoleon's military power was sealed. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist\*Starred \* Varied interpretations of Napoleon's retreat from his invasion of Russia have been attempted, but before confronting War and Peace, it behooves readers to ground themselves in the chronology of the 1812 campaign. Zamoyski sets the diplomatic table that preceded Napoleon's adventure, the 1807 treaties of Tilsit that made Russia France's ally. Resentment in Russia made them dead letters by 1811. Switching from incisive portraits of the principals in these preliminaries, Napoleon and the dreamy Czar Alexander I, Zamoyski synthesizes a comprehensible account of the invasion itself, buttressed by graphic descriptions that survivors left about their misery. Affairs deteriorated so rapidly for la Grande Armee that only a fifth of it actually reached Moscow. Zamoyski excels in the gruesome battle scenes along the way--Borodino, of course, but especially the invaders' disintegration at the Berezina River. Zamoyski displays not only narrative ability but also persuasive interpretive skill when he turns to events in the Russian camp. They belie the retrospective memory of nationalist resistance, which is a dubious proposition considering Russia's autocratic, serf-supported society. The author disclaims definitiveness for his panorama, but modesty won't protect him from deserved praise. Gilbert Taylor Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved "Adam Zamoyski's account of the 1812 campaign is so brilliant that it is impossible to put the book aside." (Michael Burleigh, The Sunday Times) "A harrowing account. ... Utterly admirable. It combines clarity of thought and prose with a strong narrative drive." (Antony Beevor, The Daily Telegraph) "Told with vigor, sweep, and insight, Moscow 1812 brings this epic moment to life in a thoroughly fascinating way." (Jay Winik, author of April 1865) "Zamoyski elegantly delivers gripping storytelling, bold revisionism, and poignant suffering." (Simon Sebag Montefiore, The Evening Standard) "Hundreds of books have been written about Napoleon's invasion of Russia. Moscow 1812 is perhaps the best." (John Lukacs, author of Five Days in London) "Powerful. . . . Brilliant. Zamoyski's exposition of the 1812 campaign is a model of elegant clarity." (T.J. Binyon, The Sunday Telegraph) "A brilliant, chilling account." (Ed Vulliamy, The Observer)