



# Moscow 1812: Napoleon's Fatal March

*Adam Zamoyski*

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## **Moscow 1812: Napoleon's Fatal March** Adam Zamoyski

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.

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