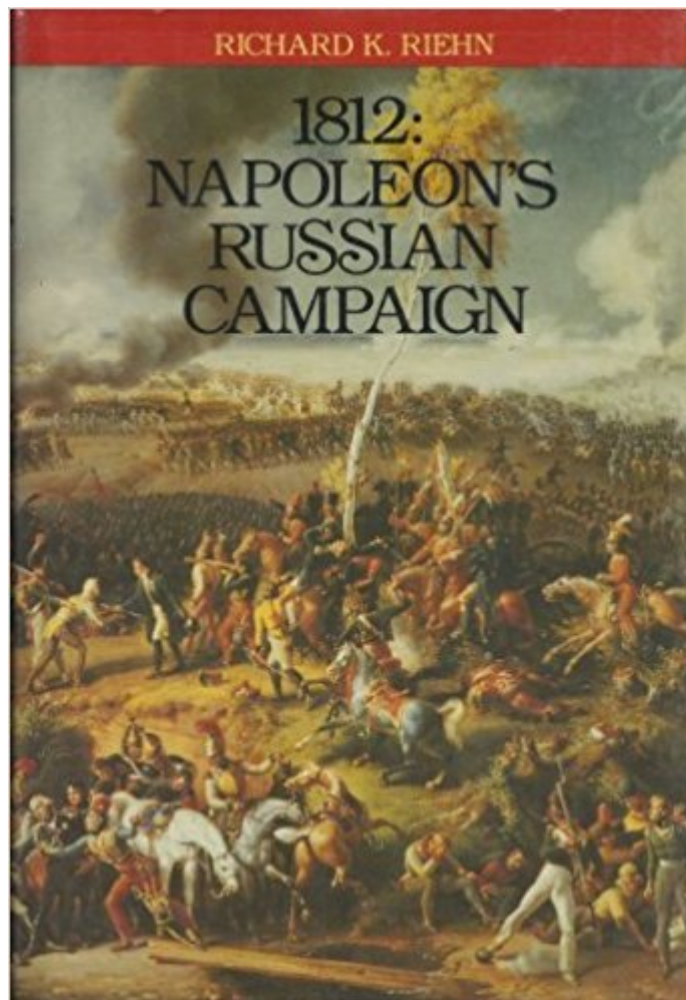


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1812: Napoleon's Russian Campaign



Synopsis

This groundbreaking new study employs primary sources never before translated from the German and the French, and contains vivid recreations of battles and troop movements as well as the political alliances of the Napoleonic age. Illustrated.

Book Information

Hardcover: 525 pages

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Customer Reviews

This major study of one of history's most decisive military campaigns richly details the invasion of Russia in June 1812 by Napoleon's army of 600,000. Although the emperor expected to blitz the Tsar's forces into rapid surrender, five months later he was fortunate to escape with a tattered remnant of 8000 followed by some 40,000 starving stragglers. Riehn, a translator and freelance writer on military topics, analyzes Napoleon's miscalculation of Russian resources and resolve, his poorly conceived logistics and uncharacteristic indecisiveness at Smolensk and Borodino where he missed his two chances to destroy the enemy. Included is a review of French and Russian military establishments of the day, showing how the two forces were mobilized, trained and deployed in the field. Riehn reveals how severe winter conditions during the last part of the retreat enabled Napoleon to claim that "only God and the elements" had proved stronger than his Grand Army. Napoleon actually came away from the 1812 catastrophe with his reputation enhanced.

Recommended for military student and general reader alike. Military Book Club selection. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Most historians writing about Napoleon's 1812 debacle succumb to the inherent drama of the

tragedy: Moscow in flames, dashing Cossacks, and lines of infantry suffering in the frigid Russian winter. Riehn takes a more hard-eyed professional approach, weighing the technical, strategic, and diplomatic factors in this serious study of the military elements of the campaign. His examination of the historiography, line tactics, and late-Napoleonic battlefield dynamics alone will make this a treatise of lasting importance. Casual readers will still do best with Curtis Cate's popular but respectable *The War of the Two Emperors: The Confrontation Between Napoleon and Alexander* (LJ 10/1/85). Military Book Club selection.- Raymond L. Puffer, U.S. Air Force History Prog., Los Angeles
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When I write on Napoleon's Russian Campaign this is the book I most reference. Make sure you understand this was a long lasting complex affair that is difficult to understand. Richard does much to explain this campaign. More than just about any war that comes to mind this was a battle of logistics. Starvation and disease killed more certainly than any bullet during the campaign. Riehn goes to explain at great depth why Napoleon's preparations failed so miserably. There are other aspects that other historians gloss over. One of these was how the Grand Army's experience worked perfectly against it. How the lack of discipline in gathering what supplies were available ensured that most the army never touched what was gathered. Further Richard explains how the French Army's supply organization was a perhaps the Army's worst enemy. He goes on to highlight how forced marches just ensured huge losses when the supply wagons could not keep up. Marshal Devout's forced marches cost the French 30,000 troops in a week. This was just short of what the Grand Army would suffer at Borodino! In my opinion this is the book on the campaign in the English language.

Invading Russia doesn't seem to be a good idea. I know of three major campaigns, all ending in disaster: Charles XII of Sweden (against Peter the Great), Napoleon, and Hitler. Charles XII and Hitler were mediocre generals at best, but Napoleon--how could he blunder so grotesquely in strategy and tactics? Riehn's book does an excellent job of explaining it. The lack of maps, as the other reviewer noted, is definitely a problem in following the details of logistics and battles. My paperback edition has one map, but it's lousy. However, Riehn makes up for this with a strong narrative that makes the whole campaign come alive. My father found a great book years ago--"Retreat from Moscow", by Bourgoigne (?) long out of print. It's the memoirs of a French officer who miraculously survived the retreat. If you can find it, read it!

One of the best books ever written on Napoleonic Campaigns !Impressive amount of details.

Richard Riehn has written a great book that is rendered almost unreadable by the complete lack of maps. His book features very detailed descriptions of troop movements and I was unable to fully appreciate and follow his obviously well researched book. It will always continue to amaze me why many authors fail to put maps in their books to allow the reader to follow the troop movements. I don't think I should have to have my world atlas on my lap while I read a book. Maybe future editions will add maps?

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