

NAPOLEON

Almost everyone has heard about Napoleon Bonaparte. He is one of the most famous people in history. For fifteen years he ruled France as a dictator. His empire included most of Europe. Napoleon had all the power needed. How would he use it? In many ways he helped the French people. He set up a uniform code of laws. He created the Bank of France. He passed fair tax. He supported public works and schools.

Napoleon wanted more. He wanted to crush England. He could not invade "the nation of shopkeepers" directly, because his fleet had been destroyed by the English in 1805. Napoleon had a new idea. He would starve England into defeat. The nations of Europe would not be allowed to trade with England. Without such trade England would collapse.

The Invasion of Russia

For a while it looked as though Napoleon's plan might work.. Most nations were forced to accept the "no-trade- rule. However; the key to the success of the plan was Russia. Russia was ruled by Czar Alexander 1_ Russia was the only major nation of Europe Napoleon did not control. In 1807, however, Alexander agreed to go along with Napoleon's plan. In exchange, Napoleon promised great things for Russia. Napoleon never fulfilled his part of the bargain. By 1811 the friendship was over. The no trade rule was hurting Russia more than it was hurting England. The only winner seemed to be Napoleon.

In addition, Napoleon was making moves that Russia did not like. France drew closer to Austria, Russia's old enemy. Napoleon also wanted to take over Lithuania. This was a direct threat to Russia. Armies on both sides were put on alert. Napoleon's army numbered over a half a million men. Napoleon was certain that one or two quick victories was all that was needed. The Russians would beg for peace. So, in June 1812, Napoleon crossed the Niemen River into Lithuania

The Russians, however, refused to play Napoleon's game. They retreated, and they burned anything that might be of use to the French. Napoleon chased after the Russians. His army caught and defeated the Russians at Smolensk. The Russians moved further back into their country. Another bloody battle was, also fought at Borodino- The Russians were narrowly beaten again, but they still did not surrender. Finally, on September 14 Napoleon marched into Moscow. Surely the Russians would surrender now.

Alexander was no where to be found. He, and the other Russian leaders, had simply moved to another city. There was no one left to surrender to Napoleon. He had Moscow all to himself. Then someone set fire to Moscow. No one was sure who started the fire, although the Russians felt sure that Napoleon was to blame. They would never surrender now. Their sacred capital was in ruins.

Still, Napoleon waited until October 19 for the surrender that never came. There was nothing left for Napoleon to do. He had to retreat. Going into the huge country of Russia was much easier than getting out. To make matters worse, there was an early winter in Russia that year. Soldiers fell ill. Some deserted. Thousands died from cold. Thousands more died from starvation. Still thousands more were killed by Russian troops who struck the rear of the French army.

Of the over 500,000 soldiers Napoleon took into Russia, less than 100,000 came out. Napoleon had won nothing. His invasion of Russia was one of the worst military disasters of all time. Napoleon's power was now broken. He was still able to win a few more battles. By this time, however, Europe was tired of Napoleon. Too much blood had been spilled in his name. In 1815, he was exiled to St. Helena, a tiny island in the South Atlantic. He died six years later from an ulcer.

Name - _____

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|-------------------|-------|--|
| 1 Napoleon | _____ | The nation of shopkeepers |
| 2 Fair tax laws | _____ | The title of Russian rulers |
| 3 England | _____ | Invaded, but not defeated by Napoleon |
| 4 "no trade" rule | _____ | The capital of Russia |
| 5 Alexander I | _____ | Napoleon's place of exile |
| 6 Austria | _____ | Passed by Napoleon to help the French People |
| 7 Lithuania | _____ | Where Napoleon defeated the Russians |
| 8 Smolensk | _____ | French Dictator |
| 9 Moscow | _____ | Russia's old enemy |
| 10 St. Helena | _____ | Russia's leader in 1812 |
| 11 Russia | _____ | Napoleon entered here when he crossed the Niemen River |
| 12 czar | _____ | Napoleon's plan to starve England into defeat |