Napoleon’s Russian Campaign  
Campaign Overview

Introduction

Napoleon’s invasion of Russia in 1812 initiated one of the most monumental efforts in the history of warfare. The campaign presaged the bloody world conflicts that were to follow in the 20th century.

The scope of the campaign in Russia was enormous both in terms of the number of people involved and the expanse of territory touched. To undertake the Herculean task of bringing Russia to its knees, Napoleon assembled over 600,000 men on its borders with perhaps 500,000 troops actually entering Russia.

The cost of the campaign was huge in terms of treasury and manpower. Like a huge cloud of locust Napoleon’s armies cut a swath through Russia devastating towns and villages along the way leaving many of the civilian population dead, homeless or destitute. At campaign’s end over 400,000 of Napoleon’s command were dead along with at least 250,000 Russian dead. In large measure the seeds of Napoleon’s eventual downfall were sown in 1812.

Causes

Given the enormity of the task and the risks involved why did Napoleon choose to invade Russia? There is no simple answer to this question. Several factors contributed to this fateful decision.

To outward appearances Russia and France seemed to be the best of friends following the Treaty of Tilsit signed in 1807. Napoleon and Tsar Alexander professed admiration for each other. The agreement they reached in 1807 though probably had more to do with political reality than any genuine appreciation the leaders had for each other.

Russia had been twice beaten by Napoleon. Austria and Prussia were cowed and Great Britain wasn’t on the continent. Russia had little choice, but to agree to Napoleon’s generous terms. Likewise while Napoleon had defeated Russia he lacked the means to do much more to further subjugate Russia and he desperately needed a powerful ally in an Europe that seemed comprised of nothing but enemies. His friendship with Prussia and Austria was tenuous at best having been forced on those two states.

The cracks in the alliance began to show almost immediately. As part of their alliance with France, Russia was forced to abide by Napoleon’s Continental blockade. This forced enormous economic hardship on Russia and her merchants. The Tsar felt pressure to renounce his adherence to the Continental blockade and finally yielded to the pressure when he announced Russia’s withdrawal from the blockade on December 31, 1810.

This announcement rankled Napoleon who feared Russia’s example would soon be
followed by the other nations of Europe. For the Continental blockade to work against
Britain Napoleon believed Russia would have to participate. A campaign against Russia
to force adherence to the blockade began to be envisioned.

Adding to the friction between Russia and France were a number of other issues. Napoleon had
begun negotiations with Tsar Alexander to cement their alliance by marrying into the Alexander’s family. The Tsar was slow in responding to Napoleon’s overture, so the French leader went elsewhere and married the Emperor of Austria’s daughter. The Tsar chose to take this as a personal affront.

Napoleon also began to dabble in the political situation in the Balkans. Russia feeling a
long time kinship with this region was not pleased with the French intrusion into what they
viewed as their area.

France’s growing power and influence worried Russia. Highlighting this growth was
Napoleon’s incorporation of parts of Germany and his talk of forming a new Polish state.
On top of these growing fears the Tsar was incensed when Napoleon took control of
Oldenburg. The Duke of Oldenburg was an uncle by marriage to Alexander.

It was apparent to both sides that the new countries were heading for a confrontation.
Both sides began to plan for war by 1810.

The French Plans

The French plan was fairly straightforward. To quote Napoleon the plan was “Pretend an
attack on Moscow on a front sufficiently broad. Carry it out in earnest. And when the
Russians come to me, I will pin them and we will see how it goes. Once I have destroyed
their army I will dictate peace”. Clearly Napoleon was assuming that a major battle would
occur within a few weeks of the invasion, he would win and the Continental blockade
would once again be enforced in Russia.

To begin with Napoleon began assembling his forces. He expanded his regiments to four
and five battalions using newly raised and barely trained conscripts to flesh out his units.
He used officers and NCO’s from existing battalions to provide the leadership in the
newly raised units. Many NCO’s were promoted to become officers of the new battalions.

The arms of Napoleon’s various allies were twisted to provide additional troops for the
campaign. Some units were withdrawn from his campaign in Spain to provide their
strength to the effort. His treaties with Prussia and Austria were enforced so that each
country was required to provide a corps for the impending campaign. Men were
contributed to his army from most of the nations of Europe. Battalions were present from
as far away as Spain and Portugal, to Switzerland, Italy, Croatia, most of the German
states and Poland. All told there were 265 French and 291 foreign battalions assembled.
The Cavalry was made up of 219 French squadrons along with 261 foreign squadrons. It
would truly be a “world war”.

Perhaps it was hoped that the size of Napoleon’s army would make it clear to the Tsar
that victory would be impossible and an actual campaign might not be needed. Napoleon
did recognize that the logistical problems for an army this large would be daunting. He
made the decision that living off the land would not be possible and began building large supply magazines and collecting most of the supply wagons in Europe. Even then he did not foresee the necessity of advancing beyond the Dvina River.

Unfortunately for France, Napoleon did not handle the political preparations as thoroughly. In this sphere the Russians certainly outdid him.

The Russian Plans

With war looming many plans were discussed on the Russian side. Count d’Allonville suggested a pre-emptive strike westwards as early as 1811. The plan hoped to knock the Poles out of the campaign and bring Prussia into the war on the side of Russia. This plan contemplated a protracted campaign that would drain French financial resources. After the foray into Poland it was envisioned that the Russians would then fall back and then guard the approach to Moscow.

Count Wolzogen suggested a withdrawing defensive posture, which would use a scorched earth policy. It was suggested that any decisive encounter with the French be avoided, and little left for the French to sustain themselves. As the Russians fell back they would occupy fortified camps guarding the approaches to St. Petersburg and Moscow.

Minster of War, General Barclay de Tolly submitted a plan that called for a quick thrust into the borderlands near Russia. It was hoped that this would rob Napoleon of the forage in those areas. The Russians then divided into two armies would block the path towards St. Petersburg and Moscow. Then if Napoleon advanced towards Moscow the army guarding the route to St. Petersburg would move to support the Moscow army.

General Ernst Von Phull developed a plan based on defending around one fortified camp. He determined that this camp should be built near the small village of Drissa on the Dvina. His plan called for one army to fall back and occupy the fortifications at Drissa. If the French attacked this entrenched camp, the second Russian army would hit Napoleon on the flanks. If Napoleon divided his army, the Russian army at Drissa would destroy Napoleon’s divided army in detail. Phull felt that the Drissa location would guard the approach to St. Petersburg and Moscow. While unpopular with the Russian high command, it was this plan that was initially adopted by the Tsar.

Like Napoleon none of the Russian planners envisioned a campaign that would not advance very deeply into Russia. Additionally the Russian planners failed to appreciate just how large an army Napoleon was raising.

Russian preparations were much more successful on the diplomatic front. With war impending it was recognized that it would be important to settle Russia’s differences with Sweden and Turkey. Making some concessions Russia signed agreements in 1812 with both nations. This freed up troops guarding Finland against Sweden, and a whole Russian army that was engaged in a war with Turkey. Russia further secured monetary support from Great Britain.

Logistics

Napoleon knew of the failure of earlier campaigns into Russia. Throughout history earlier attempts to invade Russia had failed to take into account the vast, empty spaces of Russia.
Aware that his usual tactic of living off the land with his invading forces would not work he began assembling supply wagons from across the empire. He also began the construction of advance supply magazines.

While detailed in its planning, Napoleon’s plan envisioned a relatively short campaign of no more than a month or so. The French logistical plan while adequate to the concept of a short campaign was not equal to the long drawn out campaign that eventually ensued. The eventual French advance moved huge distances from the magazines that had been built. Further complicating the problem was the usage of Napoleon’s troops of large supply wagons that difficulty on the poor Russian road system.

French logistics further broke down at the lower levels of command. Some commanders, like Davout, did an excellent job of seeing to their troops needs others were largely oblivious to the issue.

The enormous attrition that the French army was to suffer during the campaign actually began before the crossing of the Nieman. Troops began to drop out of formation while moving through the open spaces of Poland. While the Russian campaign is popularly remembered for the damage done to the French army during the snows of winter, the largest loss was suffered during the heat of summer and the advance into Russia. Thousands of Napoleon’s army died from thirst or hunger, especially among the troops marching in the rear of the advancing columns. By the time the troops arrived from the rear at a supply area, they would find the forage long since gone. Further, many died of thirst and even suicide during the long marches over miles and miles of the Russian hinterland. It also estimated that after the first couple months of the campaign there were over 50,000 deserters marauding in the rear areas.

By the time Napoleon finally brought the Russians to a reasonably sized battle at Smolensk in mid August, his main army had shrunk to 60 or 70 percent of its former size. The task Napoleon found was something akin to fighting a fire by using a colander to carry his water. By the time he got to the fire, much of the water was gone.

Napoleon’s logistical problem only got more desperate as the campaign continued. The Russians had begun employing a scorched earth policy after the first few weeks. Supply had to be brought over an increasingly long and vulnerable path. More and more troops had to be detached to guard the rear areas further siphoning the strength from Napoleon’s striking force.

The Russian logistical problem was simpler. Like Napoleon the Russians established supply magazines. They had the advantage though that the citizenry were more forthcoming with supplies for their own troops. Additionally supply lines were getting shorter, and garrisons could be reabsorbed into the main Russian army.

**Napoleon’s Army**

The army assembled for the impending campaign was huge. It contained over 600,000 troops more than 100,000 horse and over 25,000 vehicles. Napoleon organized this huge force into eleven corps, four reserve cavalry corps and An Austrian corps. The force was so large that initially Napoleon divided the army into three army groups. A main force was under his personal command, another forces of several corps were placed under his brother Jerome, and a like group was given to his stepson Eugene.
Ultimately McDonalds’s X corps consisting primarily of Prussians was given the task of moving north and investing the seaport town of Riga. Reynier’s Saxon VII corps was joined Schwarzenburg’s Austrians to protect the southern approaches to Poland against Tormassov’s Third Russian army. A further two corps, Oudinot’s II, and St. Cyr’s Bavarian VI corps were detached to watch a growing force of Russians assembling south of St. Petersburg near the town of Polotsk. Two other corps were left in Reserve, of these Victor’s IX corps was eventually given the task of insuring Napoleon’s rear flanks.

Napoleon’s army varied in ability and enthusiasm. First it was only partly French, making up less than half of the army. Poniatowski’s V corps was comprised of Poles who were enthusiastic. They saw the coming campaign as a means to re-establish a Polish homeland. Lithuanians were to enlist later and join with the Poles. Eugene’s IV corps was comprised largely of Italians. The Italians did not see much action until later in the campaign when they acquitted themselves well at the Battle of Maloyaroslavets.

Less successful were Neapolitans who were not used to the cold Russian weather and disappeared in large numbers. Similarly there were Spanish and Portuguese troops present who deserted in great numbers. The Bavarians suffering from the poor environment around Polotsk disappeared in large numbers.

The various German states were well represented in Napoleon’s army. When led well they fought well. The troops of Baden, Berg, Hesse, Wuerttemberg and Westphalia all gave good service. The Wuerttembergers were often given the worst assignments and their division could only muster 1500 men for the climatic battle of Borodino.

The Austrians were led in a lethargic manner by Schwarzenburg and did not accomplish anywhere near what they could have. Schwarzenburg’s leadership may have been influenced though my secret political dealings with the Russians. Fighting with Austrians were Reynier Saxons of the VII corps. Reynier prejudiced against Germans was an unfortunate choice for this command and his troops were aware of how he felt towards them.

The huge French and allied cavalry was well skilled. They were over used during the campaign making long marches with little rest. Murat’s handling further aggravated their fatigue. Often they were formed to attack rearguard Cossack units only to see those units disappear when the charge was ordered. The quality of the cavalryman’s mount dramatically decreased as they campaign wore on, provided the trooper was fortunate to still have a horse.

**The Russian Army**

The Russian army was considered brave under fire, but poorly led. Many of the army’s officers were recruited from other countries. An exception to the poor leadership often found in the army was Minister of War Barclay de Tolly. Barclay as Minister of War undertook to modernize the Russian army and had instituted a number of changes to make the army more efficient. He was to lead the army at the beginning of hostilities with Napoleon, but only after some initial confusion.

At the beginning of Napoleon’s invasion Tsar Alexander was present near the front and in command of the Russian combined armies. Barclay commanded Russia’s First Army of the West and its 127,000 men. Prince Bagration commanded the 48,000 men of the Second
Army of the West. Further to the South was a Third Army of the West containing around 45,000 men under General Tormassov. Additional troops were being collected to assist the Russian effort. Thirty thousand troops protecting Finland were being shifted south after the conclusion of peace with Sweden. The Army of the Danube under Admiral Tchichagov, about 35,000 men strong, was marching north to combine with Tormassov’s army following the conclusion of a peace treaty with Turkey. Additionally a number of divisions located in the Crimea and the Caucasus were being released to join the main Russian effort.

It soon became apparent to the Tsar that his presence at the front was hurting rather than helping. He decided to leave and return to St. Petersburg to rally the Russian people. In doing so he left no specific instructions as who was to command the combined Russian effort. This role fell by default to Barclay who as Minister of War assumed the role of combined commander.

The assumption of command by Barclay was not well received by the higher Russian command. Barclay was viewed with some distrust because he was of German-Scots ancestry and was not seen as a Russian Slav. Further he excelled in the detail of war, but his more remote and cautious personality did not resonate well with other Russians in general. He was to have particular problems with Prince Bagration. Bagration more epitomized the Russian approach of the time. Bagration was a more fiery, aggressive leader. This fit well with the Russian attitude of the day, which was to seek battle early and hurl the French invaders from the soil of Russia.

Because of the differences in personality and their attitudes on how the campaign should be prosecuted Bagration and Barclay were to clash often. These clashes almost led to disaster for the Russians.

The Russian infantry was composed mostly of serfs who were uneducated, but obedient. They would often stand their ground stolidly taking huge losses to long range artillery fire and would just step forward and assume the place of lost comrades. A Russian infantry regiment was almost entirely wiped out at the battle of Borodino in this manner despite not firing a shot.

As part of Barclay’s reorganization Grenadier companies were pulled from infantry regiments and used to create regiments of combined grenadiers. Also as part of the reorganization, cavalry brigades were pulled from Russian corps to form Russian cavalry corps.

Russian cavalry was well horsed during the campaign. Making up a portion of the Russian horse contingent were Cossacks. The Cossacks were generally a somewhat independent arm of the Russian army. They were grouped in a tribal sort of fashion forming together others from the same region. While they were excellent in harassing Napoleon’s army they didn’t really have the discipline to be used effectively in a conventional pitched battle.

Russian artillery was plentiful and typically of good quality. While there are some French first hand accounts that they had a tendency to fire high, they served with distinction. However, leadership could cause them too inefficient. At the battle of Borodino, the commander of the Russian artillery reserve, General Kutaisov was killed leading an infantry attack to repulse a French gain. As a result of this heroic effort, much of the reserve artillery was left unemployed and did not have the impact on the battle that it could have.

Opening of the Campaign
With the opening of the campaign, Napoleon sent McDonald and his Prussian X corps to threaten Riga. Napoleon took command of his I, II, III, Guard corps accompanied by the I and II Reserve cavalry corps and drove through Kovno towards Vilna. It Napoleon’s hope that he would catch the Russian 1st army under Barclay west of the Dvina River. Further to the South an army under his son-in-law Prince Eugene was to move keep Bagration and his 2nd army separated from Barclay. Eugene’s command was made up of the IV, VI, and III Reserve Cavalry corps. His brother Jerome led the V, VII, VIII and IV Reserve cavalry corps in a pursuit of Bagration. The Austrians under Schwarzenburg were to keep an eye on Tormassov’s 3rd army and to keep the Russians from making a move into Duchy of Warsaw.

The French move across the Nieman on 22 June caught Barclay off guard. He didn’t expect the move until the 25th at the earliest. If Barclay envisioned an early battle with Napoleon the early French movement disabused him of the thought. Both he and Bagration were force to begin to withdraw eastwards. This was fortunate for the Russians, as they had badly underestimated the strength of Napoleon’s army. An early battle would have surely led to Russian disaster as they were outnumbered by almost 3 to 1.

There followed a number of advances where Napoleon sought to bring the Russians to battle. It was initial hope to catch to the 1st Russian army under Barclay to battle. When this failed his attentions turned towards bringing Bagration’s 2nd Russian army to battle. Jerome who was given this task failed. It is arguable what led to the failure. Part of the blame lay with Jerome, but undeniably difficult terrain and the problems contributing to moving such a large army also were at fault. Napoleon incensed at Jerome’s failure removed him from command a replaced him with Davout. Jerome left the army in a huff. He complicated the pursuit by not acknowledging Davout’s command and the advance stalled.

In the meantime Napoleon’s troops were being asked to march at least 25 miles a day. This took a toll on the French army as the heat of the Russian summer, combined with thirst and hunger caused many to drop out and die during the interminable marches. In addition to the physical the daily marching caused psychological damage to the French army with a number deciding to commit suicide. Napoleon’s huge army was becoming smaller with each passing day.

Barclay realizing that there was no immediate hope of linking up with Bagration and offering battle fell back on the fortified camp of Drissa. A young Prussian Colonel Clausewitz was asked to scout the camp ahead of the Russian army to determine its suitability for making a defense. Clausewitz destined for future military fame, as a theorist was dismayed at what he saw. The position was easily flankable. It was not close enough to roads leading to St. Petersburg or Moscow to pose a threat to Napoleon. Further the fortifications under construction were not complete. He had the unenviable task of presenting his report to the Russian command while his mentor General Phull stood and watched. It was Phull’s recommendation that the camp at Drissa be used as the key to the Russian defense plans.

The Russians scrapped their plans to stand at Drissa and decided now to withdraw to Vitebsk where they hoped to finally join up with Bagration and his 2nd army. In the meantime Bagration was doing his best to move towards Barclay’s 1st army. His movement though was stopped as he attempted to move through Moghilev. Davout and his command intercepted him at the town of Salta-Novka just south of Moghilev.

Davout managed to get about 28,000 troop into a defensive position near Salta-Novka. Bagration arrived with his army on July 23rd. There ensued one of the first major battles of the Russian campaign. Davout held the town and forced Bagration to back track preventing
a combining of the two main Russian armies for the time being. French losses during this battle were estimated at around 4,000 men to about 2,500 on the Russian side.

Shortly after the battle in the south at Salta-Novka, Napoleon closed on the Russian rearguard in the north near the town of Ostrovno. To protect his withdrawal toward Vitebsk, Barclay had detached a rearguard of about 14,000 men around Ostrovno under Ostermann-Tolstoy. The French advance guard led by Marshal Murat and Prince Eugene encountered the Russian force on July 25th. The roughly 22,000 men of the French advance guard were able to push back the Russian after losing around 3,000 men to the Russians 2,500.

Elsewhere McDonald and his X corps had invested Riga, but were doing little else. In the south Tormassov’s 3rd army was raiding across the Bug River into the Duchy of Warsaw. The size of Tormassov’s army surprised the Napoleon. It was obvious that the threat would require both Reynier’s VII corps and Schwarzenburg’s Austrians to contain it.

Along the Dvina in the north Wittgenstein’s Russian I corps had been detached from Barclay’s army and was proving to be a threat to Napoleon’s northern flank. Napoleon was forced to detach his Bavarian VI corps to bolster Oudinot and his II corps to counter Wittgenstein.

After the successful action at Ostrovno it appeared that Napoleon had finally achieved his objective of forcing a large-scale battle with the Russians. Arriving in front of Vitebsk on July 26th Napoleon found Barclay’s 1st army arrayed in front of him. Rather than force a crossing of the Dvina and Luchesa Rivers with the troops available to him Napoleon felt it better to bring up additional troops for battle the next day.

During the morning of the 27th perhaps after learning that Bagration was no where joining him Barclay decided to withdraw once more. Napoleon awoke and found in frustration that the Russians had once again eluded his grasp. With his army fatigued and heavily attrited from weeks of long marches Napoleon decided to call a pause to the campaign. Gone now were any hopes of defeating the Russians in detail. A general battle would mean that he would now face both Russian armies combined.

So far Barclay’s strategy of withdrawing and avoiding the blows of Napoleon’s army seemed be working. A significant chunk of the French army had been lost due the rigors of the long march in to Russia. Troops were being detached to guard rear areas further weakening the French army. The supply lines were becoming increasingly longer and more vulnerable to harassment. Despite all this Barclay’s tactics were not popular with the Russian high command or with the Russian people. It was galling to surrender such huge tracks of territory. As a result Barclay was feeling mounting pressure to take some aggressive action. On August 8th Barclay made a half-hearted strike at Napoleon near Inkovo, but quickly halted after he feared he was falling into a trap.

The Campaign Heats Up

With his abortive offensive at Inkovo over Barclay decided to move towards Smolensk where Bagration had gathered his army. A division under Neverovski had been placed east of Smolensk in the town of Krasnoi. Meanwhile Barclay tried to decide what to do next. Bagration was of little help to Barclay. Upset with what he viewed as Barclay’s timid handling of the campaign he bordered on the point of being insubordinate.

Napoleon’s army moved south of the Dnieper and pressed on towards Smolensk. With his
command now frittered away to perhaps two-thirds of its former strength Napoleon was sensing the need to force the decisive action soon.

The French advance guard encountered Neverovksi’s division in the town of Krasnoi on August 14th. The campaign was about to enter its most active combat phase. Murat and Ney leading the advance guard of about 15,000 troops pushed Neverovksi’s division of about 7,000 out of Kransoi. While the French won at the First Battle of Krasnoi the victory due to some bungling by Murat was not as complete as it could have been.

Neverovski, after losing about 600 men at Krasnoi managed to extricate his division to Smolensk where he found troops of Bagration’s 2nd army waiting to cover their withdrawal. Defending Smolensk was Raevskii’s 7th corps along with some cavalry.

The French advance guard still commanded by Murat and Ney arrived on August 16th. In front of them stood Russia’s “third city”. A huge mediaeval wall surrounded the city. The wall stood at least 30 feet tall in many places with several towers placed along its length. Several feet thick the wall would prove impervious to fire even from the French 12 pounders. While the wall was imposing it was in a state of disrepair and known to the French there were gaps at various places along its length.

After Murat drove the Russian cavalry back behind the walls, Ney made some poorly coordinated attacks on the town during the fighting of the 16th. During the afternoon of the 16th Napoleon arrived and assumed command. A decision was made to make a full assault on the city the next day.

During the evening of the 16th Barclay decided that it was too risky to stand and defend Smolensk. He feared that the French would mask the town and then move eastwards, find a ford across the Dnieper and cut both the Russian 1st and 2nd army off from retreat to Moscow. Bagration took most of his 2nd army eastwards on the road to Moscow. Responsibility for defending Smolensk was turned over to troops from the 1st army. While all of Barclay’s 1st army were present there were actually about 30,000 defenders in the city.

While Napoleon had well over 100,000 men on the battlefield only around 50,000 would see action when the battle opened on August 17th. The battle opened with artillery fire from both sides. The Russians were able to mount some guns on the rampart of the old walls and positioned some guns on the northern bank of the Dnieper. During the initial phases of the battle most of the fighting took place in the outlying suburbs located just outside the walls of the fortress. The fighting was fierce and losses were terrible on both sides. Even when the French made their way to the fortress walls there was little they could do at that point. They had no guns powerful enough to bring down the walls and no ladders allow them to climb over.

Sometime during the fighting the city inside the fortress began to burn. The Russians held onto the city until nightfall. Barclay decided that it was time to leave and began to withdraw with hopes of escaping to the east towards Moscow. The French entered the city during the night and found it littered with the bodies of Russians many of whom had been burned to death from the conflagration that had take place inside.

The battle at Smolensk had cost the French about 8,500 men and the Russians roughly 6,000. Now the Russians were in peril and they would have to evade the French pursuit.

Marching through the night much of the Russian army found its way to safety. Some
formations however became lost and an opportunity to destroy much of the Russian army presented itself to Napoleon on August 19th.

Ney and Murat leading the pursuit ran into a Russian rearguard near the town of Valutino-Gora. Advancing on the north side of the Dnieper the encountered tough Russian resistance. During the action Junot now in command of the VIII corps crossed a ford over the Dnieper which placed them on the flank of the Russian rearguard. The overmatched Russian defenders were gradually giving grown as they retreated toward Lubino. The Russian rearguard was protecting much of their army, which was still escaping just to their rear. Had Junot acted decisively and attacked from his advantageous position the Russians would have been routed. The Russians retreating in some disarray to the rear would have been easily overcome.

An action at this juncture by Junot could very well have destroyed the Russian 1st army and very possibly would have ended the campaign in victory for Napoleon. Instead Junot refused to act. Despite berating from Murat to attack Junot decided to encamp. It is not sure what held Junot back. Clearly he had deteriorated from his early glory years and it was apparent that he suffered from problems with drinking a perhaps-mental instability.

Whatever the reason, he did not act and a golden opportunity to end the campaign was lost that day. Instead the action cost the French upwards of 9,000 men including one of its most promising divisional commanders, Gudin. The Russians escaped with their army still intact while losing around 5,000 men.

At about the same time action had taken place on other fronts. To the south Schwarzenburg’s Austrians along with Reynier’s Saxon VII corps had defeated Tormassov’s 3rd army. The action had taken place on August 12th near the town of Gorodetchna. This battle typified the Austrian participation in the Russian campaign. It was becoming apparent that the Austrian’s heart wasn’t in the campaign. In fact it was rumored that they may actually have been involved in secret discussions with the Russians. Presented with an opportunity to do real damage to Tormassov’s army Schwarzenburg displayed a lack of initiative and seemed content to just push the Russians back. The Russians lost around 3,000 men during the battle compared the Austro/Saxon force’s 2,200.

In the north Wittgenstein gained fame and Russian approval by taking his outnumbered force and attacking two French corps at the town of Polotsk. The attack on August 17th took the French by surprise. Despite his inferior numbers Wittgenstein was able to make gains on the first day of the battle. By the second day of the battle, the superior numbers of Oudinot’s and St. Cyr’s forces began to tell and he was forced to retreat. The First battle of Polotsk cost the French around 6,000 men and the Russians 5,500. The battle put the French on notice that Wittgenstein was a force to be reckoned with.

While Wittgenstein was forced to retreat he did so with most his force still intact. While sitting north of the French in Polotsk he began to grow his force with reinforcements from troops pulled out of Finland. Eventually his command would grow to a point where he poised a dangerous threat. He would play a role in the closing events of the Russian campaign.

Back at Smolensk major decisions were being made on both sides. Most of Napoleon’s top aides wished to halt the campaign for the year and encamp at Smolensk. There were several factors that supported their argument. First the French army had lost heavily in battle and during the advance through Russia up to that point. Men were fatigued, the horses of the army were worn and the supply lines were growing increasingly long. They recommended that Napoleon halt for the year. He could bring up additional forces in 1813 and with a rested
and strengthened army continue the campaign then. They also pointed out the Russian winter was approaching.

Napoleon had additional concerns though. The war in Spain wasn’t going well. He was concerned about being away from France and his center of power. A feeble attempt at a coup while not very threatening didn’t help to assuage his fears. Further many of his allies in the campaign were not very willing participants. Another year in Russia might see their support crumble. Finally it was not in Napoleon’s nature to stop a job half done. After contemplating the issue Napoleon decided to press on with the campaign. Surely he thought that capturing Moscow would finally bring the Tsar to the peace table.

On the Russian side dissatisfaction towards Barclay’s “timid” handling of the campaign up to this point was growing to near mutinous levels. Several top Russian commanders were complaining to the Tsar. Prominent Russian civilians likewise were unhappy with Barclay’s prosecution of the war. Finally the Tsar felt it necessary to remove Barclay from command of combined Russian armies. Despite the Tsar’s dislike for Kutusov he decided to appoint the 67-year-old general to lead the Russian armies.

Kutusov was a tough old warrior. During battle he received bullet wounds to his head. One of the wounds cost him his sight in one eye. He lived a hard life and had become considerably overweight. Kutusov was so large he could barely mount a horse. Yet he had fought Napoleon. He had been defeated at the battle of Austerlitz though some of the responsibility for this defeat rested with the Tsar who insisted on exercising his authority on the battlefield. Kutusov though was a Slav; he was well known among the soldiers and well liked. When he arrived at army headquarters the morale of the whole Russian army was greatly increased.

The Russian army received an additional jolt in the arm with arrival of 15,000 regular reinforcements along with another 10,000 militia.

Kutusov recognized the merits of Barclay and retained him to command the 1st Army of the West. He also knew the politics of the Russian army and knew that he would have go give Napoleon his battle somewhere before Moscow. He rejected any plans to give battle near the town of Gzhatsk preferring to choose his own battlefield. He accepted a recommendation to make his stand near the small hamlet of Borodino.

Napoleon’s main French army converged on the Borodino battlefield reaching the outlying area late in the afternoon of September 5th. Kutusov had yielded to his chief of staff, Benningsen, and had allowed the fortification of an outlying prominence near the village of Shevardino. The fortification nearby was called the Shevardino redoubt.

The fighting that occurred at Shevardino was an ominous foreshadowing of the main that was to follow two days later. In a tough seesaw fight the 30,000 troops of the French advance guard led by Davout was finally able to dislodge the roughly 20,000 Russian defenders. With Russian blood up Kutusov had to reign in Bagration who was ready to commit his entire command to the defense of the redoubt. As night time fell the Russians withdrew to their positions a mile or so to the east. The battle had cost Napoleon about 4,000 of his army and the Russians had lost around 6,000 men.

Both armies to ready them for the coming struggle used the day of September 6th. The Russians continued to build and reinforce their fortifications. Initially the Russians had set up their defense with the village of Borodino and the Moscow road being at its center. The Russians side began to worry about their exposed left flank and Kutusov was persuaded to move the 3rd corps of Barclay’s army to bolster Bagration who was on the Russian left.
Napoleon spent most of the day in reconnaissance. During his war council, Davout advocated a flanking move using his corps and Poniatowski’s corps to move around the exposed Russian left flank. Napoleon perhaps out of pride because the plan wasn’t his or perhaps out of fear of the Russians once again slipping from his grasp declined Davout’s plan. Instead he planned to essentially right at the center of the Russian army. While inelegant this plan would not allow the Russians to once again avoid a general battle.

As the sun rose on the Borodino battlefield Napoleon had some 130,000 troops with 587 cannon. Kutusov had around 100,000 troops plus around 10,000 militia many armed with pikes and about 10,000 Cossacks. Perhaps the bloodiest day of the 19th century was about to begin.

In some of the bloodiest fighting of all time the lines went back and forth. Positions were captured, recaptured and captured again. Dozens of generals were killed or wounded on both sides. Most notably on the French side Caulaincourt brother of Napoleon’s master of horse was killed while leading a successful charge that captured the Great Redoubt. Montbrun and Tharreau were also killed. Even Davout was wounded when his horse was shot from under him and he was trapped under it. The Russians lost their chief of artillery Kutaisov and most importantly the commander of its 2nd army Prince Bagration. All told the French lost upwards of 28,000 men and the Russians 45,000.

While Kutusov represented the battle of Borodino as a victory to the Tsar and the Russian people the fact that remained that Napoleon while bloodied carried the field. Kutusov retaining a little over 50,000 men of his army was forced to withdraw towards Moscow. Napoleon’s advance continued.

Standing in the village of Fili on September 13th, just to the west of Moscow, Kutusov convened a council of war. He put before the council the question of whether to abandon Moscow without another battle. While most voiced the opinion that Moscow should be defended, Kutusov realized that a successful stance would not be possible with his weakened army. He made the decision to withdraw his army to the east and leave Moscow to Napoleon.

Kutusov’s exodus brought most of Moscow’s populace with him. When Napoleon arrived at Russia’s capital on September 14th he found few people to greet him. It is rumored that Count Rostopchin, the governor of Moscow, arranged for the burning of Moscow. With Napoleon in residence, Moscow began to burn on September 15th. While Moscow was burning Kutusov turned south and then west and took up camp to the south of Moscow near the town of Tarutino. In the mean time Cossacks and guerrillas operating behind the lines began seriously harassing the French lines of communication.

Sitting in Moscow, Napoleon expected at peace delegation to arrive from the Tsar. The peace delegation never arrived. Instead the Russians were planning to take the offensive. Wittgenstein was given the task of driving the French flank on the north. Admiral Tchichgavov was to drive north and hopefully link up with Wittgenstein at the Berezina River. The plan was to cut Napoleon and his army off from the west.

After sitting in Moscow for several weeks it started to become apparent to Napoleon that the Tsar would not capitulate. This was confirmed after peace overtures from Napoleon were rebuffed.

Napoleon knew the Russian winter was fast approaching. Despite Moscow’s burning there might be enough to supply his men in the Russian capital through the winter. Troubling
though were the more and more frequent stabs at his line of communications back to France. Couriers were being intercepted and even relatively large forces were not safe when out in the countryside.

Napoleon made the decision that he would need to abandon the hard won city. He hoped to march back to Smolensk where his army would spend the winter and resume the campaign in 1813. A difficult decision lay before him. If he retreated back over the path he had taken to Moscow he would pass over land that had been largely devastated by his march in. Going back on the roads further north would take him through less populated areas and hence forage there would be slim. Napoleon decided to go south and then turn west. This would provide him a route of retreat that would pass through land that was likely to provide sufficient forage for his army. The great retreat was about to begin.

The Retreat

As Napoleon was making preparations for withdrawing his army the Russians struck. Murat a force of Poles and cavalry guarded his southern flank against the rebuilding Russian army. An informal truce had developed between Murat’s troops and the Russians further south.

Kutusov’s chief of staff, Benningsen, urged his commander to strike the weary Poles and French just to the north of their camp. An ambitious plan was developed to strike at Napoleon’s southern flank.

Reinforcements had poured into the Russian camp near Tarutino. While many were still training it was apparent that the Russian army was again viable. Benningsen’s plan called for the entire Russian army under Kutusov to strike Murat’s command. Unfortunately for the Russians the plan was not coordinated well.

The lack of coordination prevented a complete Russian victory, but they did inflict a serious loss on the French. Marching out of the mists on the morning of October 18, the Russians caught the French and Poles unready. Valiant fighting by Murat’s command of 18,000 was able to save the day, but not before they had lost 3,500 men and 36 cannon. Of 36,000 Russians involved in the action roughly 1500 became casualties. The Russians also lost the corps commander Baggavout during the battle.

Napoleon was shocked at the news of Murat’s defeat. He hastened his efforts to move his army back to Smolensk. Loaded with loot and some supplies the ungainly French army train began making it’s way westward.

At the same time the Russian pressure was beginning on the over stretched French lines. Wittgenstein, now reinforced, commanded an army of 40,000. The two corps of Oudinot and St. Cyr weakened by illness had deteriorated to 23,000 men.

Wittgenstein struck again at Polotsk. This time he had the numerical superiority. The French, Swiss and Bavarians defending were able to hold on to Polotsk in two heavy days of fighting, but ultimately had to withdraw. The battle cost Napoleon another 8 to 9,000 soldiers and Wittgenstein’s Russians suffered 8,000 casualties.

Crucial to Napoleon’s plan of taking the southern route of retreat was the town of Maloyaroslavets. The southern road crossed the Lusha River at the town of Maloyaroslavets.
The French and Russians arrived at the town almost at the same time. There ensued a tough battle primarily featuring Napoleon’s son-in-law Prince Eugene and his IV corps. Eugene’s Italian IV corps had heretofore been little used. With this force Eugene was able to throw 24,000 relatively fresh men into the battle.

The Russian forces again suffered from some command control problems and were unable to bring their entire army to bear and had a roughly equivalent number of men in the fight. The primary Russian force involved in the battle for Maloyaroslavets was Docturov’s corps.

After most of a day’s fighting the Russian were pushed back and Maloyaroslavets was secured by Eugene’s troops. In the fighting, Eugene had lost about 6,000 men including one of his divisional commanders, Delzons. The Russian suffered 8,000 casualties.

Despite holding the town and the bridge to the southern route Napoleon was unsure about his ability to keep moving along the route. The strength of the Russian army and their defense of Maloyaroslavets convinced him that it would be unsafe to continue this way. He made a fateful decision to back his army up. The French army would have to withdraw back over the road it had taken to Moscow, but now they would be moving in the opposite direction.

It was at this point that the first signs of disintegration began to appear. Napoleon’s army loaded down with all variety of vehicles and loot taken from Moscow did not make good time. Troops began to fall out and the integrity of the marching formations began to break down. Napoleon was urged by his staff to leave some of his cannon behind. They argued that this would free horses to pull supplies and wounded. Napoleon refused and the strain on horse as well as man began to tell.

The Russian staff hounded Kutusov to aggressively pursue Napoleon. Cautious, Kutusov was just not sure how much bite was left in the French army. Perhaps by the aura of Napoleon he was content to follow him out of Russia and let the strain and the coming winter do its work on the French army.

Yielding to pressure though, Kutusov allowed Miloradovitch to catch Napoleon at the town of Vyazma. It was November 3rd and the first snow flakes were falling when the battle began. Napoleon had a force of around 25,000 men present at Vyazma. Miloradovitch limited by Kutusov’s uncertainty had a similar number of men on the field. The Russians were able to capture some French stragglers during the battle, but were ultimately held back. When the battle ended the Russians had lost around 1,800 men and the French lost over 7,000. Prince Poniatowski was wounded during the action.

The snow began to fall and the roads were becoming icy. Finally some French cannon were abandoned, as the worn horses could not pull the artillery up the now slick hillsides.

Napoleon hoped to stabilize his now rapidly disintegrating army in Smolensk. When he arrived he found some supplies and preparations made for the army. By this time though the army was beginning to panic. The army was terribly spread out on the road of retreat and stragglers were numerous. Many formations had lost all cohesion. In their desperation on reaching Smolensk the troops wasted much of the supply that had been stored for them in the town.

It became apparent that the army would not be able to stand at Smolensk and the retreat must begin again. Napoleon stopped in Krasnoi in an attempt to allow some of his straggling formations to close up. The Russians attempted to cut the straggling formations
off from the base Napoleon had established at Krasnoi. From November 14 through the 18th a series of actions occurred as Napoleon tried to keep the door open to the sanctuary of Krasnoi. Fighting on snowy ground Napoleon finally employed his Guard and was able to save his last remaining formations, but not until 39,000 thousand troops had been lost along with over 100 cannon.

Near the end of the actions of the Second Krasnoi, Marshal Ney and his rearguard command became separated from the main force. The French camp was now in an extremely dismal mood as they continued their retreat.

Unknown to the French side, Ney survived. He, reportedly holding musket in hand, led a desperate defense with the survivors of his command. Holding off attacks until nightfall they were able to eventually make their way back to the main French army. His return three days later buoyed the army’s morale even though he made through with barely 800 men of his original corps of 9,000.

Napoleon was aware that his northern and southern flanks were being severely pressed by Wittgenstein and Tchichagov. He was desperate to make it to the Berezina River ahead of them. If he failed the Russian army would have him surrounded. He had Dombrowski with 5,000 men secure the bridge at the town of Borisov. His heart sank when he found out that the bridge had been lost on November 21 to the Russians.

The French army arrived at the Berezina on November 25. With no bridge to cross the river it looked as if their cause was lost. A ford was found across the river near the village of Studienka. Earlier he had ordered his engineer, General Eble to abandon his bridging equipment. Eble while discarding much of the equipment had with remarkable foresight kept enough to construct a bridge if planking could be found.

Russian troops south of the Berezina were lured away from the crossing site by ingenious demonstrations that Napoleon devised. With the Russians gone, Eble and his engineers dismantled Studienka and used its planking to construct two rickety bridges across the Berezina.

Catching on to Napoleon’s ruse the Russians began attacking on November 27th. With Victor’s newly arrived IX corps reinforcing him Napoleon was able to hold the Russians at bay and salvage much of his army. The bridges were burned on the 28th leaving nearly 10,000 stragglers on the northern bank. Perhaps because of the cold or fatigue those remaining stragglers could not be coaxed across the bridges.

The retreat continued to slog back towards the west. Napoleon quit the army to head back to Paris on December 5th. The ragged remnants of the Grand Armee began arriving in Vilna on December 9th. The Prussians making up McDonald’s X corps declared themselves now neutral. The campaign was effectively over.

The campaign in Russia had cost Napoleon and his allies over 400,000 men 100,000 horses and perhaps 1000 cannon. Russia lost close to 250,000 troops along with great devastation to many of its towns and villages. The Russian civilian population had suffered greatly during the invasion.

The seeds for Napoleon’s downfall had been sown. When the campaigns of 1813 began Napoleon had to construct army with many of his veterans now gone. He had to create a cavalry force using many men who barely knew how ride. Gone also were many of his allies. It would take a miracle that even his genius would be unable to find.
Designer’s Notes

Napoleon’s Russian Campaign had been a work in progress for four years. The campaign is fascinating in its scope and consequences. To capture the campaign in a playable format many tough decisions had to be made.

There were innumerable directions that the game could have gone. Adding all the possibilities would have made for a game that was hard to follow and unplayable in a human being’s lifetime. Selecting when and where to begin the campaign was one of those tough choices I had to make.

It may be easier to explain the campaign I created to explain first why I didn’t go down some other paths. One option I considered was to allow the Russian player to make a pre-emptive strike into Poland. This was considered by the Russian command. It was likely that this choice would have led to defeat. Additionally the battlefields that I would choose, since the campaign never even went close in this direction would be pure conjecture on my part. So I believed that this would be a purely fantasy campaign.

Another campaign possibility was to allow for a French advance on St. Petersburg. I decided against this path for much the same reasons Napoleon opted against it. Which was that the roads and forage along this way would not have supported the move very well. Then after the Dvina was crossed it would again pure guesswork on my part as to where the major battles would occur.

I could have allowed for the Russians to take a more aggressive posture earlier on. This path though would have undoubtedly led to a Russian defeat. Had the Russians given battle even as early as Drissa they would have been outnumbered by at least two to one. It also would have extended the campaign by two or three more battles. With many players playing by PBEM the time to complete this long a campaign would have probably lasted more than a year. I also wondered why offer a player a choice if they will never select it? It would be like asking the Russian player do you wish to stand at Drissa and get clobbered and lose the campaign or would you like to withdraw? It seemed pointless.

If players do want to experiment with an earlier Russian stand there are Stand Alone scenarios for Drissa and some of the other early battles. These battles are noted SB_xxxx. If a player really wants to experiment with a different campaign path the tools and all the early battlefields are there for them to try. There are Stand Alone battles for all the major actions of the Russian Campaign as well as for some battles that never occurred, but could have.

I chose to begin the campaign in mid August. By that time the disparity in numbers between the Russian and French armies had begun to level out. The Russians will still be at a numerical disadvantage at this point. The chances for an aggressive Russian posture had improved a good bit by this time.

It also made sense to end the campaign not at the Berezina River, but somewhere earlier. Doing this combined with a little later beginning makes for a campaign with a more manageable number of battles. It also prevents situations where a player may only be playing to reduce the level of defeat they will suffer.

It is possible at certain stages and with the right combination of player’s choices at the campaign level to have a battle that can end the campaign much earlier than occurred
historically. In fact with the right combination of choices the campaign could end with the very first battle. Generally for this to occur both armies have to be totally committed and a player must achieve a major victory.

There will be other battles that with a victory the winning player will put the other side into a disadvantageous situation. This is simulated following this battle with another where the campaign may be won or lost. There are also some “filler” battles. These are battles where regardless of the result the campaign outcome won’t be affected. Keep in mind that since losses will be carried over to subsequent battles even these smaller skirmishes have importance.

One really nice feature of the campaign game is the possibility to terminate the battles early. You may decide in conjunction to terminate a battle early. Once players agree on the victory conditions the battle may be stopped and the campaign proceeds on to the next phase. This may be desirable when the battle is small or there seems to be little accomplished by continuing.

**NRC Detail**

Every effort was made to make Napoleon’s Russian Campaign as authentic as possible. The bibliography will show that dozens of sources were consulted. I even had a correspondence with some of the American military men we have at our Moscow embassy.

Orders of battle were usually well documented for the main theatres of the war. There was disagreement between some of the sources. I even found some disagreement with the same book. For example an order of battle would be provided for one battle. The book included commanders killed. Then the same book would show the “killed” leaders still commanding for a later battle. Identifying leaders was especially difficult for some of the Russian units operating outside the main theatre of operations. I tried to piece together as many of these missing leaders from action accounts of the battles they were involved in. Despite my efforts there will still be some units led by “phantom leaders”. In some cases these will be brigades where I just could not find the leader’s name or the brigade may have been led by the senior regimental commander. The strength of the units found in the game were my best estimate based on the total picture provided by the various sources.

Keep in mind that many French records were lost during the retreat. Russian data either wasn’t kept as comprehensively or is yet to be translated.

I have provided quite extensive orders of battle. There are a number of units in some of the orders of battle that are not used in any of the scenarios provided. However these additional units may be useful to the player who would like to create their own scenarios.

Russian spelling was another major problem. The Cryllic alphabet used in Russia makes for some translation differences. This shows up in the spelling of Russian commander names, the names of Russian terrain features, and even some of the Russian unit names. I found wide disagreements on spelling in most of my resources.

In determining daylight and night time hours I found the Naval Observatory web site quite useful. The site allows you to type in the year, month and date as well as the longitude and latitude to determine when it was dawn, daylight, dusk and night. You will find huge differences in the amount of daylight available in the scenarios. Since most of the battles occurred fairly far north the daylight hours varied by a good bit depending on the time of year.
Most of the battlefields of the Russian campaign were fought on latitudes that would be found far north into Canada. To put things in perspective the majority of the battles took place on latitudes also found in southern Alaska in the U.S. For Canada the battles were closer to the southern reaches of Greenland than to Quebec. In Europe the battles were fought on latitudes found in Denmark and southern Sweden. This makes for long days during the summer and long nights during the fall months.

Daylight hours were adjusted some to take into account local weather conditions. For example at the battle of Tarutino, there was a heavy mist in the morning. To allow for this daylight is pushed back somewhat.

### General Player Tips

It is important to remember that you are fighting a campaign. The old saying “he who lives today, lives to fight again another day” definitely applies. The player must weigh the advantages of standing their ground and taking force losses as opposed to taking a campaign loss. When the battle is small and there is no mention that the campaign may be won or lost it may be better to reduce losses. If you would like to remove any mystery you may consult the Campaign Flow Chart below.

In battle there is a sort of “rocks, scissors, paper” logic that operates. Artillery is very vulnerable to charging cavalry that can zip across the field and take batteries of cannon. Cavalry can be stopped by a sufficiently large force of infantry especially if they are formed into squares. Large groups of infantry are very vulnerable to artillery fire.

Infantry units, other than those indicated as restricted may detach skirmisher units. These units are excellent at harassing opposing troops. Skirmishers are also helpful in filling in gaps that may appear in your line. They are very vulnerable to charging cavalry unless they are placed in protective terrain like villages and woods.

The successful commander will use a combined forces approach as much as possible. Cavalry can be used to threaten enemy artillery and possibly threaten opposing infantry into square. Accompanying artillery can then be employed to do serious damage to enemy infantry. When opposing infantry is sufficiently weakened the cavalry should be sent in to complete the job of routing the enemy.

Careful attention should be paid to the terrain features of the battlefield. Elevations and depressions may be used to successfully mask your approach and to keep your troops safe from enemy fire. By the same token these features should be considered in making your defensive placements. A spot with a good view of the battlefield is an excellent place to position artillery. Keep in mind though that this is not always the highest point. It can also be helpful to detach skirmishers to protect blind approaches to your position.

Before starting the battle the player should locate all the victory hexes. Some battles contain exit hexes. These hexes award the appropriately “flagged” player victory points for exiting units through them. A loss can be turned into a victory if enough units are exited through these hexes. These generally indicate a commander is pursuing the other side, or has been able to successfully withdraw troops.

It is also a good practice to consult the “jump map” before beginning a turn. Many of the
battle maps are quite large and approaching enemy units may not be seen. A quick glance at the jump map will inform the player if there are approaching enemy troops. It is also in giving the player an overall view of the battlefield.

**French Tips**

The campaign game has been designed to present the player with many of the same problems and opportunities that the historical commanders faced. For the French player that is a numerically and qualitatively superior army in the beginning. The numerical edge though slips as the campaign wears on. So it is important for the French player to do as much damage as early as possible. This is meant in the tactical sense. Aggressive campaign decisions can be countered. When in battle though if you sense a tactical edge exploit it ruthlessly.

The French army suffered enormously from attrition. Throughout the campaign there were reinforcements, but these did not keep pace with the losses experienced from the hard marches. This is factored into the game. Units which take no losses during an earlier battle probably will still be smaller in the next battle.

One of the key decisions that the French player will make will be after the battles around Smolensk. Assuming the campaign hasn’t ended they will be offered a choice of continuing the campaign or waiting at Smolensk until 1813. This is not as easy a decision as one might think. Proceeding with the campaign in 1812 will mean your army will be weaker. At the same time the Russian army will be smaller as well. It will also be easier for the French player to achieve a major campaign victory. This was done to factor in all the negatives that a decision to delay the campaign until 1813 entailed for Napoleon.

Essentially a decision to delay the campaign until 1813 will have the opposite attributes of the decision for 1812. The French army will larger. Many of the French garrisons detached from the army to guard areas in the rear will have rejoined their formations. This was done as it was assumed that Augereau’s XI corps would have taken over any garrison duties. Additionally Victor’s X corps will now be with the main French army. Individual French battalions will not have grown much in strength though. While replacement march troops would have replenished some losses, there also would have been additional losses experienced by French units during the winter. The net gain effect of replacements and losses during the winter will essentially cancel each other out. The main growth to the army will be the addition of the X corps and the returning battalions. At the same time the Russian army will have grown with the addition of new battalions and Admiral Tchichagov’s 3rd Army of the West.

The French player also had an advantage in the number of light troops available. This can be helpful in exploiting and plugging gaps in the line. They can also be used to harass the Russian troops.

**Russian Tips**

The Russian commander like his historical counterpart is best served by avoiding losses early on. Survival should generally be your first priority. If you can escape a battle with a draw and most of your troops intact you are doing great.

One challenge that the Russian player is likely to face is fighting a delaying action. You must
strike the balance between delaying the French, inflicting casualties, while retaining as much of your force as possible.

An important thing to remember with most of your Cossack units, they only get the “cavalry charge” bonus if the infantry unit they are charging is disrupted. Guard Cossack units are exempt from this rule.

At a couple points during the campaign you will be offered the option of withdrawing. Keep in mind that this choice does not always work. If the French player makes the correct choice, they may catch you in the act of attempting to withdraw. At the battle of Borodino, you will be given the option of withdrawing from the battlefield. There are some risks associated with making this choice. First the French player may disrupt your attempt at withdrawing. Secondly, even if the withdrawal is successful, your army will lose a special morale modifier. This morale modifier makes your troops less likely to rout. This loss of the modifier reflects the loss in morale that would follow a decision to abandon Moscow without a fight. Deciding to withdraw at Smolensk will similarly affect Russian morale though to a lesser extent.

Mainly be patient. Wait for the French army to weaken and then strike.

Thanks

I would like to thank several individuals for their help in designing this game. First I would like to thank John Tiller for his guidance and friendship. He is unbelievably patient and enjoyable to be around. I want to thank my two main testers, JD Causse and my brother Steve Cutshall. They have been good friends during the years of testing. Hopefully it is a testament to the game, but I think it also a statement about them that even after four years of swapping game files with me they always were there.

Most importantly I would like to thank my family. My wife Donna and my two sons Mathew and Michael they have at times had to put up with seeing my back as I worked on finishing the game. I would like to thank them for their patience and even their attempts at being interested in what I was producing. My wife probably knows more about Napoleon’s Russian Campaign than any other sixth grade English teacher in the country.

Finally I would like to dedicate this game to my Mom who passed away last year following a stroke. She encouraged my interest in history. I was working at the time on a Napoleonic project for PBS, when I arrived at her hospital bedside following her stroke, one of the last things she said was “PBS?”

Charlie Cutshall
Campaign Flow Chart

Range of possible outcomes of resulting battles going from Russian desirable to French desirable.

F= French choices
A= Russian choices

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- ⚫ Slowing the Advance (Lubina)

F1
Vyazma

- ⚫ Slowing the Advance - Low Morale (Lubina-lm) ⚫

F1
Vyazma-lm

- ⚫ The Retreat at Risk (Lubina-Danger)

F1
Vyazma
Fr Major Victory

- ⚫ The Retreat at Risk - Low Morale (LubinaDanger-lm) ⚫

F1
Vyazma-lm
Fr Major Victory

- ⚫ Skirmish at Vyazma (Vyazma)

F1 (1812)
Shevardino

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