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From Penguin : Russia Against Napoleon: The Battle for Europe, 1807 to 1814 by Lieven, Dominic [29 July 2010] before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Russia Against Napoleon: The Battle for Europe, 1807 to 1814 by Lieven, Dominic [29 July 2010]:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Napoleon's Waterloo Before WaterlooBy M. A NewmanAlexander I has had a bad reputation as an indecisive leader. This book will do a great deal to rehabilitate this tsar's reputation and will underscore the various strengths and weaknesses of the Russian empire to wage war.It is important to keep in mind that Alexander was constantly refining his position and determining what would yield the best results. He was a different person in 1805, 1812, and in 1814 as was the Russian Army a different entity as well in all of those years.The 1805 campaign was a shock to the system of the Russian empire. To face defeat at Austerlitz and the subsequent increase of ties between Russia and France did a great deal to provoke action.As is the case with Russia (then, during the Soviet period and now), this followed with certain bureaucratic constraints. History has shown that it is very much a function of the leader (be he Tsar, General Secretary or something else) and his ability to pick the right individuals to deal with specific tasks all of which fall within his sphere of coordination. The autocrat proposes and the bureaucracy implements.Alexander emerges as nothing so much as a juggler of personnel as the Russian empire sought to prepare for the next struggle between 1805-1812. Lieven has masterful command of Russian intelligence work in Paris, the development of key means of waging war, and also the development of strategy and tactics during the period.The importance of logistics is another matter that has an impact on all aspects of warfare and any person who thinks that

the issues associated with logistics can be ignored soon finds himself defeated. This was a major consideration throughout Lieven's narrative. For instance it is a requirement to protect the armaments factories at Tula that informs Kutuzov's decision to allow Moscow to be taken. Large cities can always be replaced with time, armaments factories are more precious than gold during wartime. Lieven makes no secret of his agenda at the beginning of the book. He is seeking to show just how Russia defeated Napoleon. In demonstrating this process he sets himself against both Tolstoy and Clausewitz on occasion. Lieven shows that it was not just a matter of cold and mud and weather that defeated Napoleon, there was considerable planning before the war that enabled the Russian Army to begin 1812 at Vilna, retreat to Moscow as the French advanced and then to follow the French all the way to Paris in 1814. This does not diminish "War and Peace," the greatest of all Russian novels, as much as it enhances the estimation of the Russian military elite. Shakespeare's history plays are matchless, but poor as representations of actual events. The story of Russia's defeat of Napoleon can be broken down into several key battles and campaigns. The first is the battle for Russia which includes the battles of Smolensk, Borodino, and finally Berezina. The two crucial factors (which was understood before the invasion) were light cavalry and artillery. Here the Russians were fortunate in the first (which included the Cossack regiments) and challenged, but ultimately successful in the last. 1813 was about the battle for Germany and was highlighted by the battle of Leipzig, which shattered the notion of Napoleon's invincibility. Driving Napoleon from Poland and Germany also had a negative impact on his ability to restock his supply of horses. Given the necessity of horses in this age of light cavalry this was to have a huge impact on the future of the war. 1814 was the battle of France and this probably was the time of greatest uncertainty in terms of the diplomatic and political objectives. While it appears to be a foregone conclusion that the Bourbons would be replaced on the throne, this, as Lieven demonstrates, was a more complex and fluid situation than one might imagine. I think that the only flaw in this book is that Lieven does not really address just how the inclusion of the Baltic nobility, whose role in defeating Napoleon is important to his narrative, was viewed by the traditional nobility during Catherine the Great. The fact that Catherine sought to put them on an equal footing was something that was somewhat unpopular is probably something that continues to affect the way historians, both Russian and others, have looked upon their contribution. This is a minor point, however. Lieven's exploration of the details of conflict is probably one of the best works on the Napoleonic period since David Chandler's definitive studies of the French side. His tireless exploration of archival material does a great deal to change perceptions of the conflict. This is a period rich in personalities whose impact continued on beyond just the period of the wars, some maintained positions of responsibility for the subsequent 30-40 year period. This is an excellent book which should interest anyone who takes an interest in the Napoleonic period and the Russian military.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Russia's version of 1812-1814 By Nicholas Roberts This is the story of how Russia viewed the war against Napoleon and draws on many Russian sources. It is definitely a long book and draws mostly from Russian officer accounts of the war. He makes the point that during the 1812 invasion of Russia the Russian generals purposely pulled back in a deliberate attempt to weaken Napoleon. This is contrary to the French view that the Russians were forced back by overwhelming numbers. Overall I think that his thesis holds a lot of truth although I do not agree that the Russian commanders were as brilliant as he makes them out to be. He also goes into the German campaign of 1813 and the French one of 1814. He does an excellent job describing these campaigns and again goes into detail about the Russian army. He gives the Russians a lot more credit than many other historians do which I have to admit is probably true. His basic ending premise was that Russia saved Europe from Napoleon. Russia was the one that put the most men in the field and took the greatest hits. He points to the excellent leadership of the Czar as the reason for the defeat of Napoleon, not massive Russian numbers. This book is definitely a must read if you want to know more about the war between Russia and Napoleon. Just be sure to take it with a tiny grain of salt as it clearly has a Russian bias (that is more a strength however). The only thing I did not like was that the chapters in the book were extremely long. One chapter was over 70 pages so I wish he had divided the book up more.

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Could Be Better By Milton Garber At 528 pages (hardcover) this is an exhaustively detailed account of Napoleon's failed invasion of Russia (June 1812 to December 1812) and the subsequent pursuit of Napoleon all the way to Paris. Russia and Tsar Alexander led the winning coalition of Allies (Russia, Prussia and Austria with Britain mainly as a naval ally). The research is thorough, but the presentation has two main flaws: (1) There are so many mentions by name of minor actors that they get in the way of the story. And (2) Of the 15 maps only one shows troop positions and movements; consequently, the descriptions of the many battles are difficult to follow. Lieven goes out of his way to criticize Leo Tolstoy, saying "War and Peace" has had more influence on "popular perceptions of Napoleon's defeat by Russia than all the history books ever written." (pg. 525) He says Tolstoy denies any rational direction of events by human actors, leaving the Tolstoyan mythology that Napoleon's defeat was all due to snow or chance. In fact, Lieven says, Alexander and Barclay de Tolly understood from the outset that Napoleon needed one big battle early on in which he intended to defeat the Russian army and obtain a favorable peace. Alexander and Barclay de Tolly, the minister of defense, devised a rational strategy of "deep retreat" to frustrate and wear down Napoleon. They also understood that ultimate Russian security required the overthrow of Napoleon (regime change in today's parlance) and a stable balance of power in Europe. Contrary to Tolstoy these were rational strategies directed by humans. Lieven's purpose, well executed, was to write a

history of Russia's war against Napoleon from the Russian point of view and heavily using Russian sources. The book is a bit of a slog to read because of the absence of decent battle maps and the naming of too many minor actors. I would give it 3.5 stars if I could, but why not round up. A more readable account is Andrew Roberts' biography "Napoleon." (5 stars) The last sentence of Roberts' 810 page book is: "He [Napoleon] had transformed the art of leadership, built an empire, handed down laws for the ages [the Code Napoleon], and joined the ancients [Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne...]."