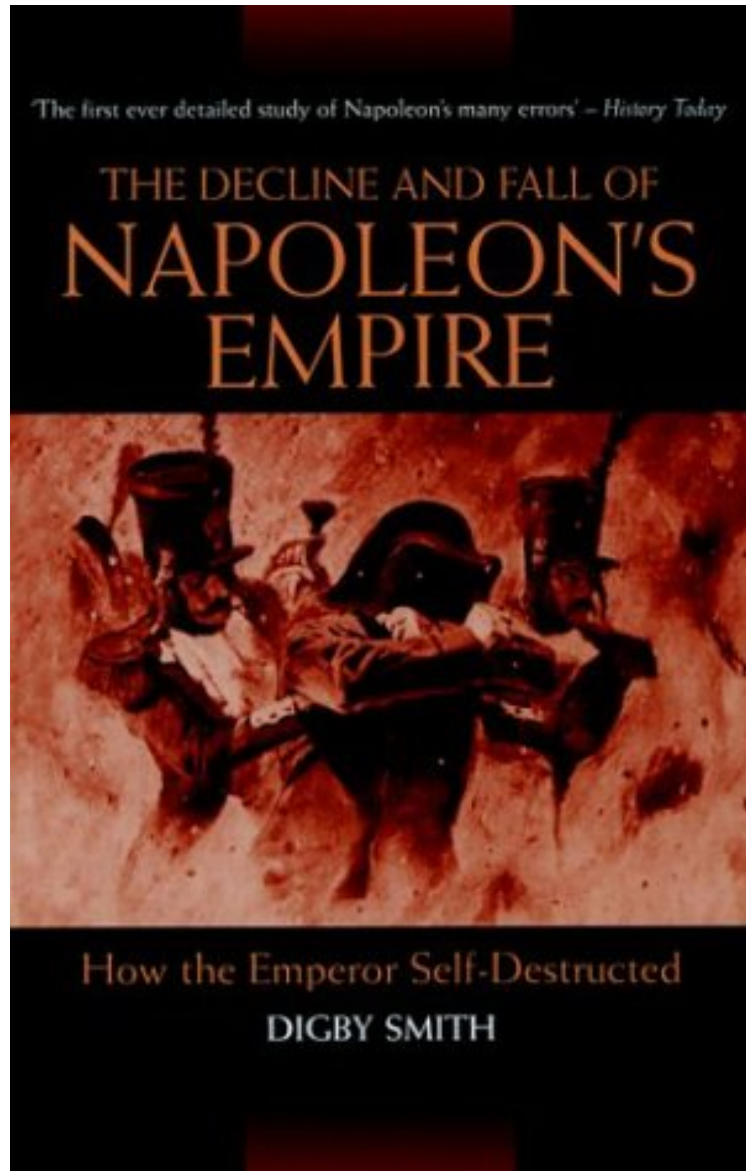


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# The Decline and Fall of Napoleon's Empire: How the Emperor Self-Destructed

*Digby Smith*

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**Digby Smith : The Decline and Fall of Napoleon's Empire: How the Emperor Self-Destructed** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Decline and Fall of Napoleon's Empire: How the Emperor Self-Destructed:

20 of 23 people found the following review helpful. Could have been a good book....if only...By Calvin DurhamIt

seems apparent from the outset that Smith just does not like Napoleon, period. This is not necessarily bad, but he bashes him at every turn and in my opinion sometimes unfairly. What irritated me was not that someone criticizes Napoleon for his mistakes and arrogance, but rather the way in which Smith handled his particular criticisms (and they are many). It seemed neither objective or rational at some points. Every adjective was derogatory to the extreme. As a reader, I quickly began to question every negative point Smith made by asking myself "What is Smith not telling me?" This book seemed to be to be akin to reading a republican or democrat's scathing review of the opposite party's actions...totally one sided and biased.I kept asking myself why Smith didn't take a more objective route in his criticism. Napoleon did make mistakes. He was arrogant and driven and yes, he was also on occasion lucky. However, his shortcomings and the mistakes that ultimately cost him his empire could have been handled so much better if only the writing had at the very least seemed to be objective.I agree with another reviewer in that the cover tells the whole story of the author's approach. You can't even "see" Napoleon in this book. You only see one author's total bashing of nearly every single thing that Napoleon did both domestically and militarily.32 of 39 people found the following review helpful. Another sad attempt from an avowed Napoleon haterBy RickThis is more of what we have seen from the author in his earlier books, only it is in concentrated form here. One look at the cover and title of this book will confirm this assertion.One cannot help but wonder why he spends so much energy in his attempts to denigrate at every opportunity someone who died nearly 200 years ago. It is such a kneejerk reaction for him that it is truly sad.If you are looking for a good Napoleonic author, I would highly recommend others such as Petre, Lachouque, Elting, Bowden, Asprey, Hofschroer, Gates, Duffy, Uffindel, Brett-James, Britten-Austin, Nofi, Kiley, Nosworthy, Blond, Johnson, Gill, Nafziger, Chandler, Epstein, von Wartenburg, Quimby, Boycott-Brown, Ludwig, Durant, Horne, Hamilton-Williams, Herold, Rothenberg, Jomini, and even Clauswitz before I would recommend Mr. Smith.With so many other authors out there, you cannot go wrong by going somewhere else.6 of 12 people found the following review helpful. The other side of the storyBy Mark and Jane GarnettI have read the previous two reviews that painted a pretty awful view of this book. I have read many hundreds of napoleonic titles and I certainly did not get the same impression of the book as the previous reviewers. The author does use some colorful language when describing some of Napoleons errors or shortcomings and I can see how these could be construed as coming from a "Napoleon hater".The fact remains though that the author highlights some very valid points about some of the errors that Napoleon made during his reign and I found it refreshing to have some of them brought together in this one volume.I am not a scholar so I didn't go through the facts with a fine tooth comb, however I saw nothing factually incorrect. What I did see was an author that is sometimes overly passionate about his point but this made it a good read from my perspective. I was happy to see the "other side of the coin" that the author presented. This book claims to be nothing more that a book outlining the mistakes that Napoleon made and I believe it achieves what it sets out to do.I heartily recommend this book to anybody who is interested in seeing things from a different perspective. You may not agree with some of the conclusions, but it gives good food for thought and balances out some of the overly "rose colored" views.

There has been a torrent of literature produced about Napoleon ever since his exile to Saint Helena in 1815. Everything from his battles and his tactics to his finances and hats has been subjected to repeated microscopic probing and analysis. Until now, however, there has been no study of the significant errors that Napoleon made himself which, though apparently trivial at the time, proved to be major factors in his downfall. Digby Smith tracks his rise to power, his stewardship of France from 1804-15, and his exile. He highlights his military mistakes, such as his unwillingness to appoint an effective overall supremo in the Iberian Peninsula, and the decision to invade Russia while the Spanish situation was spiraling out of control. Smith also scrutinizes naval mistakes - notably, Napoleon's inability to comprehend the intricacies of naval operations, his impatience with his admirals, and his failure to invest in ships and men. Smith also tracks diplomatic and political errors, highlighting his inability to conclude lasting peaces and to compromise. Smith finally addresses domestic and economic blunders, such as the establishing and maintenance of the Continental System across Europe, the imposition of a ban on direct trade with Russia (which led to France paying higher prices for naval stores of Russian origin after they passed through the hands of German middlemen), and the cost of creating various kingdoms and principalities and deposing incumbent rulers to place his relatives on their thrones.

About the AuthorDigby Smith is a respected historian of the Napoleonic Wars and the author of a number of acclaimed books on the period. For Greenhill he has produced Napoleon's Regiments, 1813: Leipzig, The Greenhill Napoleonic Wars Data Book and The Decline and Fall of Napoleon's Empire.