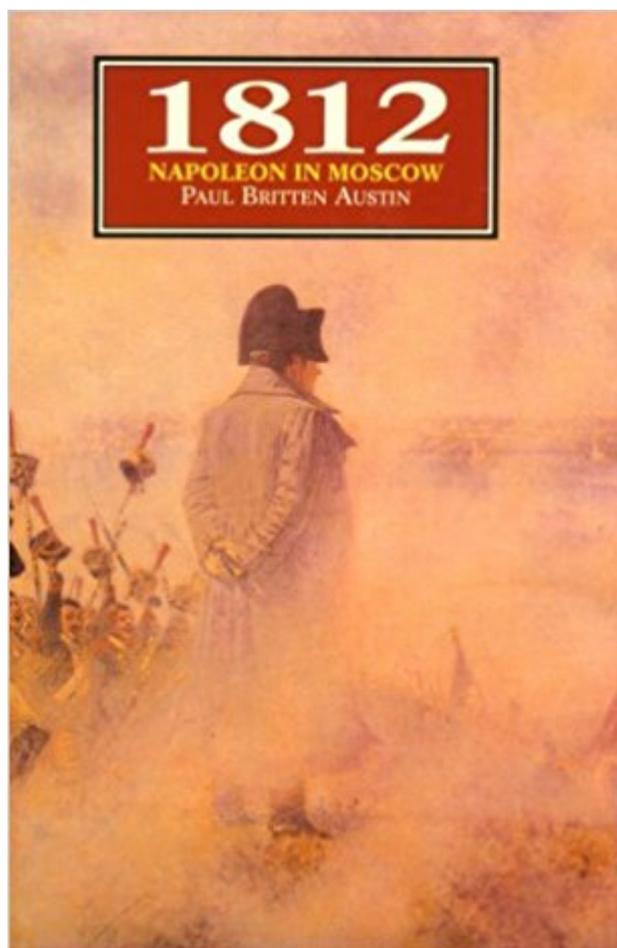


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1812 : Napoleon In Moscow



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This account of the 1812 campaign is like no other in the English language. Austin has combined descriptive prose with quotes from primary sources to produce a readable account. It is similar to the approach that was used by French historians such as Lachouque, Hourtoulle and Houssaye. By using present tense he brilliantly combines his own prose with extracts from memoirs and letters into a story-like telling of the history that transports the reader back two hundred years. We are there observing Napoleon throughout the campaign; we see what those around him and elsewhere in the Grande Armée saw and we `experience' what they experienced. This fabulous trilogy of the 1812 campaign has been re-released as the original three volumes. The second book, Napoleon in Moscow takes up the story. with entry of the French-allied army into the city, "Europe's second largest and far and away most exotic capital..." (p. 18). But it is not the grand entry into a capital of previous campaigns. Through the eyewitnesses we experience the strange anti-climax of entering an empty town, wondering if it is a trap. Some incendiaries, dressed as policemen, are brought before Napoleon, Apparently they are acting on the orders of Governor Rostopchin. There is "...a violent detonation on the side of the Kaluga Gate. [...] It seems to have been an agreed signal" (p. 26). Then the city is set afire. Following the great fire we enter a phase when Moscow is turned into a large bazaar as soldiers sell the loot that they have accumulated and, with winter approaching "whilst only few of us thought of providing ourselves with warm clothes and furs against the coming

winter, many ladened themselves down with a mass of useless things" (p. 63).

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