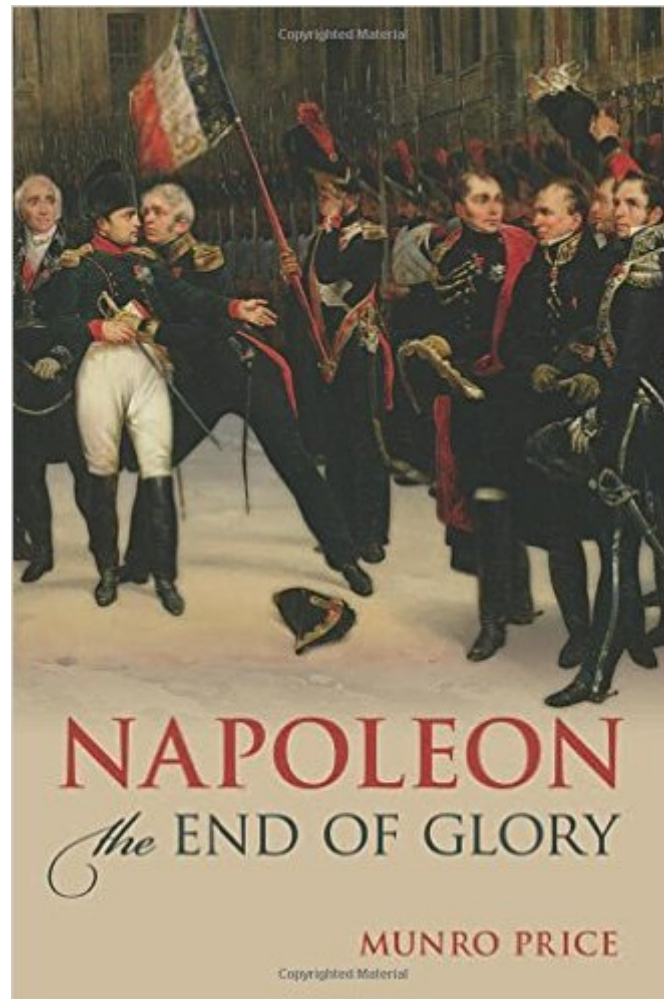


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Napoleon: The End Of Glory



Synopsis

On April 20, 1814, after a dizzying series of battles, campaigns, and diplomatic intrigues, a defeated Napoleon Bonaparte made his farewell speech to the Old Guard in the courtyard of the Chateau de Fontainebleau and set off for exile on the island of Elba. Napoleonic legend asserts that the Emperor was brought down by foreign powers determined to destroy him and discredit his achievements, with the aid of highly placed domestic traitors. Others argue that once Napoleon's military defeats began in 1812, his fall became inevitable. But in fact, as Munro Price shows in this brilliant new book, Napoleon's fall could have been avoided altogether. Exploring a critical and often neglected period of Napoleonic history between 1812 and 1814, *Napoleon: The End of Glory* offers a more complete picture of the Emperor's decline and fall than any previous work. Price analyzes the political, military, and diplomatic events of the period, from Napoleon's disastrous invasion of Russia in 1812 to the multiple failed attempts by Austria to broker peace. He illuminates the dynamic relationships between Napoleon and the wily Austrian foreign minister Metternich-whose desire for equilibrium within the European states system clashed with Napoleon's unshakeable belief in hegemony and subjection-and the charming and enigmatic Alexander I of Russia. And he explores the lasting impact of the bloody Terror of the French Revolution on Napoleon's decisions once he came to power. Rejecting the assumption that defeat was unavoidable, Price considers instead why Napoleon failed to explore a compromise peace that could have allowed him to keep his crown, arguing that the answer to this question has powerful implications for our understanding of the Napoleonic wars. Ultimately, Price provides a convincing portrait of the Emperor's decline, exposing his blindness, intransigence and miscalculations; his preference for war and his declining ability to wage it; and his nearly pathological fear of a dishonorable peace. A deeply researched study of the moment of a great man's fall, *Napoleon: The End of Glory* forces us to reconsider Napoleon's character, motives, and the reasons for his spectacular failure.

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Customer Reviews

Munro Price has detailed, in 250 pages (excluding the epilogue) the true campaigns that broke Napoleon's reign as Napoleon, the campaigns of 1813 and 1814. His account is most accessible, and still has a scholarly enough feel to it to satisfy those historians and laypersons with an appetite for the Napoleon era with a 9-page bibliography at the end of his work. It is often mythologized in Anglo-American literature and history about the "great" Battle of Waterloo as the battle that brought Napoleon's demise. But, as Dr. Price shows, Waterloo and the Hundred Days was but a minor blimp on the screen compared to the onslaught of the 1813-1814 campaign, especially the grand battles at Dresden and then the four day bloodbath at Leipzig, referred to as the "Battle of Nations" where over 600,000 soldiers fought. Despite Napoleon's failed invasion of Russia, he had managed to rally a large, if not inexperienced, replacement army that was still well armed and well led. Although momentum was starting to go against him, Dr. Price notes, "Napoleon's battle plans offered a real chance at destroying the Russian and Prussian army for good" (p.71). Ultimately, Napoleon's failure to destroy the Russo-Prussian army at Bautzen would prove fatal. On the sidelines for the first part of the new coalition against Napoleon was his age-old nemesis -- Austria. Austria, at this point, just a nominal ally to Napoleon, had been humiliated in 1805 and 1809 and still wanted revenge against the dastardly French emperor. As Dr. Price notes, Napoleon's strategy depended upon Austrian neutrality in this great conflict against France and Russia and Prussia.

According to Dr Munro price, the fall of Napoleon started during the brief but intense years of 1813-1814 .As he notes right at the very beginning of the book, Waterloo overshadowed these previous years, however, 1814 was the year when Napoleon was deprived of his throne and his legitimacy. Napoleon's fate was decided in a number of battles and the most famous ones were at Bautzen, Dresden, Leipzig and Laon .Why the French Emperor refused to compromise and accept his opponent's peace terms is the key issue discussed in the book. Was it arrogance? Was it obstinacy? Was it his hubris? In trying to answer these questions, the author used many untapped sources, like the papers of Caulaincourt, Napoleon's foreign minister and many new unpublished letters of Matternich. Other sources are still awaiting to be discovered, most of whom are in private

hands. The book comes in fourteen chapters and each one shows a different chronological aspect of those afore-mentioned years. The best chapter is, in my view, the one describing The Battle of Nations which drove Napoleon's armies back to the Rhine. The next year, 1814, forced Napoleon to abdicate and to be exiled to Elba, although after some time-for one hundred days-he regained his throne, but this was a doomed adventure which sealed his fate. There are many detailed maps here showing the many and various military moves during the battles, thus enabling the reader to better grasp the events mentioned before. There are also abundant photos and plates and a long bibliographical list. Although Dr Price mentions that public opinion and the voices of the masses were one of his main aims to be told about in his book, this does not unfortunately happen.

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