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“We Have to Record the Downfall of Tyranny”: *The London Times* Perspective on  
Napoleon Bonaparte’s Invasion of Russia

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A thesis  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of History  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in History

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by  
Julia Dittrich  
August 2012

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Keywords: Napoleon Bonaparte, *The London Times*, English Identity

## ABSTRACT

“We Have to Record the Downfall of Tyranny”: *The London Times* Perspective on

Napoleon Bonaparte’s Invasion of Russia

by

Julia Dittrich

“*We Have to Record the Downfall of Tyranny*”: *The London Times Perspective on Napoleon Bonaparte’s Invasion of Russia* aims to illustrate how *The London Times* interpreted and reported on Napoleon’s 1812 invasion of Russia. This thesis explains how England feared its grip on Europe was slipping away due to a French takeover of the continent. This work details the English struggle in order to provide a broader analysis through a newspaper of how nations indirectly involved in the Napoleonic wars understood the conflict.

## DEDICATION

To Poppop, who taught me the power of history

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would especially like to thank Dr. Stephen G. Fritz my committee chair for his time and persistence in having me create the best work possible. I would also like to thank Dr. Henry A. Antkiewicz and Dr. Brian J. Maxson for serving on my thesis committee and their assistance in completing this work.

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## PROLOGUE

English public opinion has been noted for centuries, especially as it often differs in tone and perception from that of the rest of the world. This point is never truer than in the reporting of the events surrounding Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812. At a time when newspapers were becoming the main form of news communication, written word transmitted both accurate news and English elite opinion to the masses. Newspapers were an easy way for the masses to not only get information but a means to influence opinion based on the information put forth. From this, confusion came out that still lingers in where the line between the truth and falsity was in newspapers throughout the world in the modern period. To this day, newspapers deal with issues of neutrality, taking a very skilled reader to determine where the allegiances of one particular paper lie, often the tone of the writing causes confusion especially in regards to the historical record of events. However, the historian can answer why a certain misinformation and opinion on events found its way into the newspapers. *The London Times* is a unique example because it is a prominent paper during this time that exemplifies a truly English point of view free from most governmental influence. Various questions abound about *The Times*, specifically in the Napoleonic era, that illuminate the uniqueness to this paper in expressing an emerging English identity of its own.

The way one approaches information can change the course of history. The smallest instance of what is or is not included in a work, including newspapers, can transform historical interpretation. The English opinion that permeated Europe derived from a unique perspective. There is a separation between history and mentality. The main difference between the two is the portrayal of society. Theoretically, history is a fact-based account of events. Mentality, on the other hand, has a larger variable of influence from differing forces shaping one nation, in this

case British identity. History is often accessible while mentality is difficult to assess. Noting English elite opinion in reference to a key event, such as Napoleon's invasion of Russia, can aid in determining the emergence of a distinct English mentality.

1812 was a year that changed the world in many ways. Often suggested as the most notable event of the year was the English-American war. The writers of *The Times* would likely agree with this statement, putting other world problems on the "back pages." Although, with this assumption, one misses the monumental invasion of France into Russia, a transforming event in its own right. 1812 was a year of great importance where the future of many nations was determined by epic battles of massive proportions with vast amounts of bloodshed. National leaders struggled for influence over events; none so much as the English who had direct military involvement in the War of 1812, a war they were fighting against those who had defeated them only years prior. The English government struggled to control events and retain dominance in a perilous situation. Thus, English concerns in this situation focused on other nations, and no country more so than the French, led by the self-instated emperor Napoleon, who had already proven himself a willing adversary of the English. Napoleon had the means to challenge English world dominance and had proven himself in various military campaigns. Even with the English not having a direct involvement in the Russian invasion, many of their closest allies faced Napoleon. The English newspaper industry was in its infancy and news of Napoleon's exploits kept their papers selling, while learned articles seeking to explain Napoleon also revealed a unique English perspective.

*The Times*, during the Napoleonic period, was establishing itself as a leader in news for the English populace. As mentioned, the newspaper industry was gaining popularity, thus spreading valuable news to the educated English public. Established in 1795, *The Times* was



realizing its identity at the same time that Napoleon formed his own. Thus, in a sense *The Times* and Napoleon matured in a symbiotic relationship, where one influenced the other. Therefore, the opinions within *The Times* illuminate a certain idea of the Napoleonic period. In creating *The Times*, the first editors purposely wanted to set their paper apart from the others in presenting news in a professional manner, which was unique at the time.<sup>1</sup> *The Times* came into being at the perfect time when newspaper usage was a means to spread news and opinion in England, distinguishing the literature of the time following the French Revolution from any other prior period.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the paper's publication start date, other points separate *The Times* from other English newspapers at the time. *The Times'* editors realized the importance of opinions free from governmental influence, which controlled many of the other papers, because of government subsidies, in a certain manner. *The Times* was one of the first newspapers to break-free of government influence. *The Times* realized the importance of its work as telling a different side of the news outside of the governmental opinion and reasoning.<sup>3</sup> The blossoming of thought during this period caused a vast spread of ideas and pushed newspapers into the forefront of societal issues and created a certain relevance within themselves. After the French Revolution, *The Times* increased its "sharp anti-French tone" even though the English government hardly sponsored the paper as much as many of the other papers at the time.<sup>4</sup> *The Times* refused to use almost any government funds after 1803. The paper wanted to publish what it believed to be

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Williams, *Read All About It!: A History of the British Newspapers* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 82.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, 80, 83.

<sup>3</sup> Williams, 77.

<sup>4</sup> Kevin Gilmartin, *Writing Against Revolution: Literary Conservatism in Britain, 1790-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 97.

important stories and commentary without governmental interference.<sup>5</sup> For revenue, *The Times* relied on the sale of advertisements.

The paper became a rather large success due to its unique take on English society and through this, garnered the necessary advertisers to keep the paper going through the initial struggles. *The Times* clearly represented a different side to the news, which gained the paper not only respectability, but readership. The paper's economic independence from governmental bounds promoted the idea of a representation of the English nation rather than a governmental body.<sup>6</sup> *The Times'* publishers also led their commercial newspaper through a new steam-power technique in printing, making the "respectable" paper able to promote ideas to the public with a front page of commercial advertisements and last page of paid advertisements in a faster manner.<sup>7</sup> Thus, while *The Times* worked to establish itself throughout the Napoleonic era, the paper shed light into a new section of society through opinionated pieces that shaped and reflected an emerging English identity. *The Times*, under the leadership of editor John Walters II, created a specific tone that blended both common and elite opinions into one news source.

John Walters I started *The Times* using a new printing technique that sped up the printing process, and he created the paper to promote his new printing system. *The Times* began from a promotional tool that turned into a popular paper influential far beyond its original means, gaining the title of *The Times* in its third year of existence.<sup>8</sup> The paper that would revolutionize the industry and England itself officially arrived. A few years into *The Times* establishment, the editor position shifted from father to son. John Walter I passed the position onto John Walter II,

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<sup>5</sup> Kevin Williams, *Read All About It!: A History of the British Newspapers*, 84.

<sup>6</sup> Williams, 84.

<sup>7</sup> Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics: The Press and Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 86.

<sup>8</sup> James Parton, *Captains of Industry* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1893), 277.

who would be editor during a majority of Napoleon's tenure.<sup>9</sup> John Walter II transformed the paper into a legitimate news source. Walter completely eliminated any governmental influence within the newspaper and refused to gain funding from any source that would take away from the paper's monetary independence, a rarity at the time.<sup>10</sup> The symbiotic relationship between Napoleon and *The Times* only continued whenever his actions, which were subsequently analyzed and reported on in the paper, pushed the paper from a rare exception free from any governmental influence to England's premier news source.

During the time of Napoleon, especially in the ever-tense war periods, *The Times* gathered news faster than many other, well-established papers. Not surprisingly, since it lacked control over *The Times*, the English government attempted to stop correspondence between the paper and correspondents.<sup>11</sup> The English government not only wanted the news first but also aimed to tilt the news toward its point of view. This point of view left England's dominant standing in the world unthreatened. The government could not afford to let the English citizenry know that it was struggling to maintain its standing. After all, the British were being challenged in the Americas and if Napoleon's conquest of Europe was successful, it would it have been ever more difficult to expand British influence onto the world with much of its position in Europe diminished. The English people learned of *The Times* honesty and its 'stiff upper lip' attitude towards the government and thus, the paper's prestige and popularity grew accordingly. Napoleon's conquests not only empowered the emperor but also empowered *The Times*. Prior to 1814, the paper was hand printed creating a circulation of only a few thousand copies that would quickly sell out. This changed within the next few years. *The Times* attained a steam-powered

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<sup>9</sup> Parton, 279.

<sup>10</sup> Parton, 279.

<sup>11</sup> Parton, 280.

press that resolved this issue.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, Napoleon supplied the material to keep the presses rolling.

The story of Napoleon and his failed Russian campaign have been a topic of historical discussion since the event's occurrence, and the coverage in *The Times* prove this point. However, many details are either not given the attention needed or overanalyzed, causing the facts of the time to be easily blended with fiction added to bolster either side. Napoleon, being one of the most egocentric and dominating men in history, causes much debate over many of his military strategies. The military side and personality of the French emperor have been overdone in many works by historians and are missing some key dynamics necessary for a complete analysis. How is it possible to get to the truth about Napoleon without using primary sources? Primary sources give more insight than any historian can. Napoleon's life was one of an almost sudden rise and then fall from power followed by two failed coups. Napoleon's path and the English were bound to come to a head with both attempting to gain as much for their nation as possible. But first, in order to gain a grasp of the Russian invasion, one must know the man behind the action.

Napoleon Bonaparte, the Corsican native, was born into a time of revolution in France. This background would result in one of the most dominating forces both militarily and imperially. During Napoleon's youth alone, France would gain and lose numerous leaders as well as go into a downward spiral towards chaos more times than many nations could survive. The French Revolution seemingly overthrew the monarchy in the nation indefinitely. Still, the age of the guillotine and Robespierre transformed the nation into a fragmented state praying for an end to the merciless bloodshed. Here, this young aspiring military leader was able to take over an entire nation as his own. Even in today's terms, Napoleon's military strategy was

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<sup>12</sup> Parton, 280.

unique, leading the French to multiple victories, notably in Italy and Egypt before his reign as emperor. At this point from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, France was missing a leader with a lasting impact in order to rein what remained of a post-Robespierre Reign of Terror France. Napoleon's rise was well documented in *The Times*.

Although Napoleon came from humble beginnings, he rose through the ranks to become emperor of France. Oppressive actions hampered his future goals and were pointed out in the English newspapers at the time of his leadership. The most notable news source in 19<sup>th</sup> century England was *The Times*. In a time where news could take weeks to travel, the newspaper was essential to all as not only a source of information, but also in being able to influence the readership to certain leanings on issues. The thought of the English losing their territory made English writing naturally biased, especially with the nation having to fight two major wars and being directly involved with many others within this time. The English needed to cover in the news in a way that would not stress the rest of the nation with political issues but inform them of the changes. This time in England varied from the turmoil France had just experience during the revolution.

Newspapers were the means that shared their take on all issues, even those outside their direct realm. Europe was in a state of unrest in 1812 when a French emperor seemingly attempted to have the entire European continent under his control. Thus, Napoleon was always on the English radar. Napoleon was scrutinized by many people, none more so than the English who had been beaten badly by him on previous occasions such as many battles within the Egyptian campaign. The invading French troops achieved victories along their route through Russia during the summer. The main battles between the two nations occurred in fall and continued through the brutal conditions of the French retreat that winter. While the French

troops fled, the English wrote on the topic at an extreme pace. Although many have credited the weather as Russia's greatest advantage to success, they exclude the point of the military failures on both sides, especially by the emperor Napoleon. Those who do note this issue more times than not describe Napoleon's worst faults as the reason for the loss. The idea does not change due to the passage of time. *The Times* had its very own view on the event and explanations to why the invasion failed.

The English have always been notable for their opinions on various topics but none more so than Napoleon, who had defeated the English nation in Egypt, causing a natural bias because of a bitterness remaining within the English nation. However, their perspective is necessary to note. Although intriguing points can be found in other times during Napoleon's reigning years, the Russian period is specifically enlightening. By this time, Napoleon had already battled and defeated the English leading to many issues within English writing to come forth.

*The Times* in the Napoleonic period wrote from a specific English perspective that shows an overall identity for a vast number of the nation in written form. The importance of this work is to investigate how *The Times* created a certain English identity throughout the Napoleonic years in written word, illuminating its greater importance than just a newspaper. *The Times* promoted a certain 'Englishness' in the paper and in articles included in the newspaper prove a largely ignored section in the history of the early nineteenth century English history.

CHAPTER 1  
ROOTS OF DISASTER



James Gillray  
“Maniac Ravings or Little Boney in a Strong Fit”<sup>13</sup>

An 1803 English cartoon depicting Napoleon Bonaparte from a common English perspective, as slightly deranged

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<sup>13</sup> James Gillray, “Maniac Ravings or Little Boney in a Strong Fit,” [www.napoleonguide.com](http://www.napoleonguide.com), accessed February 24, 2012.

War unites many cultures. Thus, writing on war is a way to explore this phenomenon. War is often studied with the cause of the conflict as the main driving question for historians. Each war has a distinct background leading the opposing forces to the battlefield. This idea is noticeable in Napoleon Bonaparte's 1812 invasion of Russia. Up to this point, Napoleon's unstoppable French forces had dominated the world military stage on multiple continents. His confidence had grown through successful campaigns in Italy and Egypt under his generalship. Thus, the next logical step in his successive power grab was, after attaining basic support, granting himself the title of emperor in France. The opinion of the permanent Napoleonic rivals, the English, is one worthy of note during this time. The English and French were always seemingly rivals of one another, being a waterway apart from one another in addition to both having similar goals for controlling Europe's future.<sup>14</sup> The English had a particular interest in the outcome of any Russian and French encounter since it would inevitably affect their position, although the English had the resources only for defensive measures.<sup>15</sup> The English political elite took special note in such events and their opinions as expressed specifically in *The Times* showed insight on the emperor but revealed more of England's beliefs and response to Napoleon's decisions. As noted, *The Times* burgeoned as a paper during the same time of Napoleon.

1805 was the start of a vast and quick expansion of France under their newly self-appointed emperor, Napoleon, and the English political class took a particular notice being so close to the action. From Napoleon's perspective, invading England was strategically difficult, overriding any benefit, thus causing him to attack England through measures outside of the

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<sup>14</sup> Frank W. Thackeray and John E. Findling, eds., *Events that Changed Great Britain since 1689* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002), 43.

<sup>15</sup> Rory Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 4.



military such as through the forthcoming Continental System.<sup>16</sup> Yet, as in other wars, various issues preoccupied the English, with some taking occasional priority over the French. English observers saw the problems Napoleon was bringing onto the world stage but initially had more pressing issues, such as continuous problems with the United States, which challenged their standing within the Americas. Thus, the English political elite often seemed to inflict the most damage on Napoleon in the form of the written word. English observers saw the potential disaster Napoleon could bring to the European continent and beyond. *The Times*, as a strong persuasive voice of the English political elite, specifically chose to focus on certain issues of importance such as the relationship between Napoleon and Russia, as well as how English identity vastly relied on being opposing Napoleon and France. From 1805 to 1811, *The Times*' editorial opinions on Napoleon created their own interpretation on the events, focusing on the battles and treaties leading to Napoleon's Russian invasion. The English elite's opinion through *The Times* coverage was written about the Austerlitz, Dalmatia, Cattaro, and Eylau expeditions in 1806 and 1807. *The Times* wrote specific opinion pieces on ideas such as conscription and French character during this time.

From 1806 on, coverage of Napoleonic and Russian relations steadily increased in *The Times* through to the invasion of 1812, when the topic was covered extensively. 1805 ended with Napoleon focusing on the east.<sup>17</sup> The Treaty of Pressburg was a major event *The Times* focused on in 1805 because of its importance toward English foreign policy. The French had successfully defeated the Austrians at Austerlitz at the end of 1805, one of the greatest victories of the Napoleonic era, which only increased the power of France. Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz was a necessity for him to break up an Austrian-Russian alliance determined to

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<sup>16</sup> Muir, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Muir, 5.

diminish French power in continental Europe.<sup>18</sup> The contents of the Treaty of Pressburg, the resulting treaty from Austerlitz, remained unclear for a great amount of time. However, the major issues in the treaty were noticeable to English observers even from afar. *The Times* was very perceptive of the results of this treaty and the effects on the English people and their future and noted such in January 1806. *The Times* opined on how the lands conceded by the Austrians in the Treaty of Pressburg were some of the key territories of Austrian ownership.<sup>19</sup> The ramifications of the treaty were felt throughout the continent with Austria withdrawing from the Third Coalition, a group of nations gathered against France. This war's end effectively set the stage for Europe's domination by Napoleon for much of the next ten years and the Treaty of Pressburg was Napoleon's way of trying to get between the British and Russian alliance.<sup>20</sup>

Additionally, other issues mentioned in *The Times* after the treaty included the confusion noted in the paper as to why there was a large number of French troops in Paris even after military measures in Russia were complete. There was seemingly no reason for so many troops to be in Paris without Napoleon's thoughts being on forthcoming military measures. For the English elite, this action most certainly have implied war on the horizon in Europe. *The Times* also included Napoleon's subsequent treatment of Austria after its defeat. *The Times* went so far as to call Napoleon's post-battle announcement in the city of Vienna as "Jacobinical" for Napoleon promoting his dictatorial power, declaring that soon 100,000 troops converging at the French capital would show his true nature.<sup>21</sup> However, this is clearly an analysis based on the English writer's anti-Napoleonic stance running forth in the newspaper, even though Jacobinical was a term that no Frenchman wanted to hear after just ridding the nation of such extreme

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<sup>18</sup> Muir, 5.

<sup>19</sup> *The Times*, January 27, 1806.

<sup>20</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> *The Times*, January 27, 1806.

people. Yet, often *The Times* would become known for such verbiage against Napoleon to not only share their opinions, but in doing so, show a specific English reaction. Another incident that caught English attention was the Napoleonic trip to Dalmatia, a section of Croatia, only a few months later, interpreted as a French move against the Russians and Austrians.

Napoleon had spread the French military throughout Europe. In 1806, the French were in the midst of the Dalmatia campaign against Austria in Croatia. The French controlled Dalmatia since they gained the territory from the Austrian defeat in 1805 and additionally challenged the current policies in the region, leading to British discontent expressed within *The Times*.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Dalmatia gave Napoleon many advantages. The French could have Dalmatia over the Austrians, as controlling this territory helped the Continental System remain in place. Also, Dalmatia provided territory for a French military presence.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, through this time, Napoleon was travelling through many countries, emphasizing his power in many of his previously conquered territories such as Italy. *The Times* acknowledged Napoleon's recent measures since all was seemingly quiet on the French front until March 19, 1806, when talks of a Third Coalition temporarily resurfaced, muting English talk on the negatives of Napoleon.<sup>24</sup> Yet, with English and French relations, issues of empire were never settled as easily. During April of this same year, the Russians were building up forces of their own.<sup>25</sup> The Russian military measures and troops were in response to what many of the English writers for *The Times* saw as French preparation for a war between the allied nations coming to fruition. The Russians and French agreed to an alliance, with the Austrians forced to acknowledge the outcome due to the recent Austrian losses on the military front. Napoleon used the Austrians to further his

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<sup>22</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Muir, 163.

<sup>24</sup> *The Times*, March 19, 1806.

<sup>25</sup> *The Times*, April 1, 1806.

advantage. English reporters for *The Times* believed these incidents were due to the domination of the French at the Battle of Austerlitz continuing on into the treaty process.<sup>26</sup> This alliance, along with the results of the battle, outreached those involved including the Russian nation in early April.

By mid-April 1806, the next move for Napoleon was clear when the emperor attacked Dalmatia to seize complete control of the region.<sup>27</sup> *The Times'* writers saw the fault in the French military strategy on the Italian front at this time, including the aforementioned Dalmatia campaign. In late April, French and Russian tensions came to a head in war policies. The Russian move into Cattaro, a key port and fortress on the Dalmatian coast of Croatia, caused the Austrians and French to recommence war against one another, since the French and Russians were in an alliance, as a repercussion of the offensive moves of the Russian military. This incident was one of many in which the Russians partook almost solely to provoke a response from the French, showing the bitter resentment between these two nations that continuously lingered. At this point in European relations, however, the conflict between France and Austria was a greater issue than that of France and Russia.<sup>28</sup> From *The Times'* point of view, the French response to Russian action at Cattaro was a failure and was noted as properly resisted by the steadfast Russian forces on hand. This article promoted the English inclination at over-emphasizing incidents involving French failure. Yet, even with the Cattaro incident, Dalmatia was still the assumed priority for the French during this period with the increase of troop numbers in the region. Thus, the Cattaro expedition was never more than a blimp on the radar of the French military whose focus was elsewhere in the world even with its coverage in *The Times*.

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<sup>26</sup> *The Times*, April 3, 1806.

<sup>27</sup> *The Times*, April 16, 1806.

<sup>28</sup> *The Times*, April 23, 1806.

The Cattaro incident among the other French gains in power caused *The Times* to warn of the future dangers of a Napoleonic takeover of Europe: “The clouds which have for some time hung over the Continent, are thickening rapidly.”<sup>29</sup> *The Times* choice of words was fitting in this case for one clear reason: it was a description of the conscription placed on the French nation by its military minded leader, Napoleon. *The Times* used metaphor to show the direct effects of conscription on the French nation but did so indirectly by reporting on the larger effect on the continent of Europe. Napoleon saw conscription as a necessary means to the end of military success in order to be recognized on the world stage as a military might, even at the risk of incurring hated unpopularity in France. However, to *The Times* writers, the conscription effort simply illuminated the true intentions of the French military, waging an aggressive war in order for Napoleon to spread his might and ideology throughout the European world then and in the future.

The way in which Napoleon aimed to improve the French military, the reason for conscription, was specifically noted by *The Times*' writers in early 1806 because of the possibility of Napoleon's move into Austria. The move showed a lingering need for Napoleon to continue military measures even if it was not the English he was directly against. Here, even with the successful movement of the French military into Cattaro, the English believed the operation would still be unsuccessful for the French and perhaps slow the nation's progress on the military front. Above all, *The Times* writers worried about their future as such moves continued and left this question for the public to ponder: “Are all these movements, productive of so much expence, anxiety, and distrust, consistent with a state of assumed tranquility and permanent repose?”<sup>30</sup> Those who read *The Times* realized how additional troops endangered the

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<sup>29</sup> *The Times*, April 26, 1806.

<sup>30</sup> *The Times*, April 26, 1806.

future of Europe even if at the moment confined only to Austria. The next step would possibly be England and beyond continental lines.

By mid-May, the Russians and French facing one another in Dalmatia came to a head. The Russians had built a steady block of forces that was quickly followed by the French turning their sights on the region. This was only after the Austrians surrendered at Cattaro, known today as Kotor in Montenegro.<sup>31</sup> Napoleon's particular notion of the treaty process with the Austrians caught *The Times* notice in his desire for purely Austrian input on the conditions of surrender.

By mid-June 1806, the situation in Cattaro went from seemingly simple to confused based on *The Times*' opinion of the events. The confusion here arose in the question of when the French would leave Cattaro. Each source used in *The Times* stated a different answer to the Cattaro question. The lack of a clear response led to a lack of a resolve in *The Times* account on the Cattaro incident.<sup>32</sup> The conflicting information on Napoleon's next move worried *The Times* because up this point he displayed certain a predictability. Not only did such conflicting information worry the writers of *The Times*, because they feared their sources had been comprised in the sense that they could no longer accurately report what was going on, but furthermore it worried the English political elite, a voice prominently featured in *The Times*.

Each article published by *The Times* also showed keen insight into the English political mindset at the time. One article of particular note was on the rejected treaty between France and Russia of August 1806. By September, *The Times* had reported on the issue. Interestingly enough, on this treaty, the English leaned in favor of the French. The case was simple, the treaty was quickly rejected yet the Russians would not release the treaty's details. This made the English wonder what the Russians were trying to hide and allowed *The Times* to show sympathy

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<sup>31</sup> *The Times*, May 20, 1806.

<sup>32</sup> *The Times*, June 12, 1806.

to France.<sup>33</sup> Although not a common occurrence, *The Times* writers believed in the side that would benefit England and in this case knowledge of the contents of the treaty would allow them to get a greater grasp on events proving England as the benefactor. *The Times* endorsed the treaty, although adding the important caveat: “If it shall not be found to teem with artifice, ambition, tyranny, and injustice, we are much mistaken in our opinion of Buonaparte and his Negotiators.”<sup>34</sup> Siding with the emperor on a political issue, even cautiously and with reservations, remained a unique moment, as *The Times* expressed its fundamental distrust of Napoleon, while contrasting his tyranny and injustice with its presumed English opposites.

*The Times* considered this rejected treaty of 1806 as one of the highlights to the Napoleonic military measures. With no resolution between Napoleon and Russia’s Tsar Alexander, conflict was soon to follow. Therefore, as one would suspect, French and Russian tension returned again to the battlefield. Although the politically informed English were naturally biased against Napoleon, *The Times* still noticed when Napoleon’s mood changed due to a failed action, as when the Russians and French failed to come to a long-lasting peaceful agreement. The views of Napoleon on the treaty can be seen in the leader’s actions: “Though Buonaparte affects to consider the friendship or hostility of Russia as matters of perfect indifference, it is evident that he severely feels the disappointment he has experienced.”<sup>35</sup>

By the next month, October 1806, Napoleon had written a letter to the French Senate to address some major issues. At this point in European affairs, French and Austrian relations had come to a boiling point again and although *The Times* could have not predicted it, the day they published Napoleon’s Senatorial announcement also was the day Napoleon would defeat

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<sup>33</sup> *The Times*, September 13, 1806. For the purposes of these work, the original *Times*’ spelling of Bonaparte was used.

<sup>34</sup> *The Times*, September 13, 1806.

<sup>35</sup> *The Times*, September 13, 1806.

Austrian forces in the Rhine region, leading Napoleon onto Berlin. Napoleon's message to the Senate was one of strong resolve highlighting a supposed lack of French necessity to enter a war while the French wanted everything but war. Napoleon, being the excellent orator, emphasized the points that Austria was overstaying her welcome in the Rhine region, and the French would respond if necessary on a military level. Indeed, the French had forces around the Rhine and in this action, French measures were in order to prevent an Austrian takeover of the region. Napoleon's words were meant to strike a chord and could have easily swayed even the hardest opposition to his point of view. After stating the means by which France intended to use force in response to an Austrian military action, *The Times* noted: "[...] our heart is solely affect at this constant preponderance which the genius of mischief obtains in Europe, occupied incessantly in traversing the designs we form for the tranquillity of Europe [...]"<sup>36</sup> These words would have resonated in all of Europe, but specifically in France, the nation that was disturbing the peace. All of Europe seemingly wanted to unite around stability, a common idea often cited after the French Revolution. In Napoleon's case, though, this meant the French would impose their control on the entire European continent. This theory was confirmed in *The Times*' warnings: Napoleon's Continental System was soon started against the English at the end of 1806 via the Berlin Decrees in November and would last against the nation until Napoleon's overthrow.<sup>37</sup> Although, not as effective as Napoleon wanted, the impact of the idea in place still left a bitter feeling. *The Times* would also note with keen observation the relationship between Alexander and Napoleon.

With both Tsar Alexander and Emperor Napoleon being larger than life forces in their respective nations, neither was willing to concede on certain issues. This would eventually lead

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<sup>36</sup> *The Times*, October 1806.

<sup>37</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 8.



to Napoleon invading the tsar's nation. But, at this point, both leaders were willing to compromise in order for a gain of some means. Still, with treaties being signed and broken often, the two nations found themselves directly against each other by early 1807. This year would be essential in Napoleon's road to Moscow. The French and Russians had a scuffle that occurred on February 8, 1807. *The Times* article on March 5, 1807, on this incident referred to "intelligence of very great moment."<sup>38</sup> The French had supposedly defeated the Russians by forcing Russian forces to flee with a constant attack of forces at the Battle of Eylau, in present day Russia (then eastern Prussia), even if Austrian mistakes also benefited French victory.<sup>39</sup> The battle of Eylau pitted common rivals against one another again on the battlefield and helped none involved promote their respective nations in the end. In this case, the Russians tried an offensive measure against the French, which not only ended in a supposed Russian loss, although accounts of the events were inconclusive, in dictating no victor, with weather ending the battle for both sides.<sup>40</sup> News spread rapidly of this incident and with that many opinions that *The Times* spread along to the less informed English populace. In a move out of character for Bonaparte, he chose not to continue to push his troops onward once victory was in sight. The sources of *The Times* vary on the actual events, uncertain at the time even if the battle had yet to have a decisive victor.

Yet, just days later on the ninth of March, *The Times* promoted in a large section and title news of a Russian victory. Additionally, several reports noted a "complete defeat of the French," based on enough sources for the paper to publish such a verdict, however incorrect this report might seem.<sup>41</sup> By mid-March, the French were noted as retreating. However, the discussion on the topic was light on details. What *The Times* did detail was the worry they had for Napoleon's

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<sup>38</sup> *The Times*, March 5, 1807.

<sup>39</sup> Owen Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 148-9.

<sup>40</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 7.

<sup>41</sup> *The Times*, March 9, 1807.

future plans after the retreat. *The Times* warned that anything less than a complete defeat of the emperor, that could have occurred at this opportunity, would end in a future disaster of such great proportions that they believed combined efforts would fail to suffice, leading to a long line of never ending wars, prophetic, as it turned out. With Napoleon defeated in the east, he could regain strength by making a move on England; again *The Times* made it their cause to cheer on the destruction of Napoleon because it would favor England and English identity would remain the main driving force in the world. This ominous foretelling would become reality much sooner than the writers for *The Times* could have expected. The topic of the Battle of Eylau was important in British reporting.

A notable experience in the Eylau situation is that the Russians were outnumbered and outwitted by the French, allowing the French to decide by the end of the month, at attempting an armistice with the Russians. This is a vast change of pace from previous measures by Napoleon to win no matter the cost. The battle of Eylau, along with Napoleon's other victories on the continent, essentially put an end to the Third Coalition permanently after Austrian and Russian actions, along with British finances, could not stop Napoleon.<sup>42</sup> *The Times* noted how the French papers contained a different perspective and feeling than normal, a concession of sorts from *The Times*.<sup>43</sup> *The Times*, however, could not compliment the French much before changing its mind based on events. By mid April 1807, the French were continuing their almost consistent buildup in a constant stream of troops filtering through Berlin. The issue of the Russians and French continued and the English allowed some of their particular bias to be seen in the choice of Russian correspondence over others: "The information contained in this valuable Report will serve as a document for the historian, when the Bulletins of Buonaparte will either be rejected as

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<sup>42</sup> Frank W. Thackeray and John E. Findling, eds., *Events that Changed Great Britain since 1689*, 41.

<sup>43</sup> *The Times*, March 28, 1807.

fabulous and incredible, or quoted only for their vanity and extravagance.”<sup>44</sup> *The Times* criticized almost every aspect of the emperor and now even his accounts came into healthy skepticism.

The Russians had attacked French forces in May at Danzig, but the details had just come to light less than two months later in June. This incident was hardly mentioned at the time of its occurrence. France apparently took a harder hit against the Russians than discussed. This was just a skirmish between the two as had happened before, but had the battle gone as planned the two sides would have changed this skirmish into a full blown engagement with more damage easily possible on both sides. After the French defeated the Russians at the Battle of Friedland, present day Pravdinsk in Russia, on June 14, however, Alexander knew peace was necessary.<sup>45</sup> By July 16, the issue of peace at Tilsit, a town approximately sixty-two miles from Friedland, resounded throughout the continent. The tsar and emperor would meet with great pomp and circumstance. The end of the month came with peace between France and its opponent, Russia. *The Times* did not have the agreement at hand but knew their response would be notable as soon as the terms became public. The key importance of a peace agreement between France and Russia was clearly evident to *The Times*, as noted on July 20: “No peace, in which England was not a direct party, was ever, we will venture to say, of so much importance to her interests and independence.”<sup>46</sup> Although the English did not have the exact treaty, they did have available correspondence. The correspondence emphasized the importance of the agreement and how history may see such an event.

Once the terms of the treaty came out, *The Times* focused more on the distribution of territories between Alexander and Napoleon rather than dissecting the actions of either nation

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<sup>44</sup> *The Times*, April 20, 1807.

<sup>45</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 22.

<sup>46</sup> *The Times*, July 20, 1807.

itself. These issues, however, still contained a plethora of errors due to the multiple sources *The Times* cited.<sup>47</sup> Although *The Times* reported on the idea of a “maritime league” between the two nations against Great Britain, Tsar Alexander refused such an idea.<sup>48</sup> Finally, on August 10, 1807, the English newspaper got hold of, and discussed the terms of, the agreement between France and Russia. The key factor they looked for was in relation to England’s politics: “Alexander has conceded much; much more, indeed, than we could have expected; but, as far as we can judge [...], he has preserved his faith towards Great Britain.”<sup>49</sup> From the English perspective the treaty at least preserved their control of the seas, but *The Times* conclusion was devastating: Napoleon gained everything he wanted while Alexander succeeded in gaining nothing for himself or his nation. The French emperor seemingly had full control of the peace making process. The strict terms of this treaty made sure the Russians and French would still fight one another again.

By 1808, *The Times* reported rarely on Napoleonic actions in relation to Russia since Napoleon’s focus transferred to Portugal, then to Spain to spread his empire, where the British would help against the French.<sup>50</sup> However, talk of the Russians and French remained calm at first after their treaty. As noted, the British never stopped their focus on the Emperor Napoleon. However, the British had no means to be a large player on the continent.<sup>51</sup> The British were very perceptive to the intentions of Napoleon to go into Russia but only when the moment would be perfect for him to do so. Firstly, *The Times* thought that the emperor had to try to reduce other enemies to ensure success. At this moment, the Austrians were that enemy. By the end of the year, the British could tell Napoleon was itching to get back to the military front where he was

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<sup>47</sup> *The Times*, August 3, 1807.

<sup>48</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 23

<sup>49</sup> *The Times*, August 10, 1807.

<sup>50</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 29.

<sup>51</sup> Muir, 32.

comfortable.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, even with the British focus not directly involved, the war measures between France and Austria inflamed rumors in Britain at the time, August 1808.<sup>53</sup> The emperor yearned for military leadership, which for the British meant war. The British at the end of 1808 were trying to find their place in the continent with the Austrians, implying that the renewal of war coming to effect trying to sway British opinion on where to send the limited resources and troops the British had to share to help the Austrian situation.<sup>54</sup> Still, the British projected the idea that when the Austrians went to war with the French, the British would help monetarily as possible.<sup>55</sup>

However, the future relations between France and Russia never left the scope of the English range. The same can be said for Napoleon, who realized after defeating Austria that a Russian invasion was a necessary next step.<sup>56</sup> During this time, an article titled, “On the French Character,” was a change of pace for the normal reports of military measures or side comments on Napoleon. Here, the attacks were on the inconsistencies of the French character. The average French citizen, according to *The Times*, “At one time he yields his life to crown kings, at another to dethrone them; to day for liberty, to-morrow for despotism.”<sup>57</sup> The theme highlighted about the French was their constantly changing attitudes. This attitude, as mentioned, was completely opposite from the English identity set forth from the English writers, which was one of stability and moderation. French contradictions were also seen in their willingness to save French lives but to sacrifice others so easily.<sup>58</sup> Sacrifice was an idea that was associated with the English as a nation almost continuously at war. The point of vast and extreme opposites in supposed French

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<sup>52</sup> *The Times*, November 16, 1808.

<sup>53</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 81.

<sup>54</sup> Muir, 79.

<sup>55</sup> Muir, 82.

<sup>56</sup> Muir, 180.

<sup>57</sup> *The Times*, January 18, 1809.

<sup>58</sup> *The Times*, January 18, 1809.

attitudes showed the English how Napoleon gained power. Although the French wanted to believe in their independence in post-revolutionary France, they still allowed Napoleon to control their actions. *The Times* created an analogy for the French accordingly, “A Frenchman has the spirit and the docility of the horse, which, with the same patience and contentment, allows himself to be mounted by Trajan and Napoleon.”<sup>59</sup> The timing of this article is intriguing for it was a year after the paper’s ominous prediction of Napoleon’s invasion of Russia.

Only a few weeks after this description of the French, Napoleon himself even knew a war with Austria was coming, which meant Russia was not far behind in the emperor’s mind.<sup>60</sup> Mid-1809 found Great Britain and Austria united against the French in Germany.<sup>61</sup> Here, Napoleon changed tactics in order to beat Austria. Napoleon went to the capital city in order to get a quick surrender rather than his usual purely military measures in order to secure victory.<sup>62</sup> The results of the war of Austrians verses the French allowed Napoleon to continue on to Russia and he began poking again at the Russians right after Austrian defeat.

A few months later, in September 1809, the tension between Russia and France once again came to a boiling point. Foreign mail brought news of a crack in relations as mentioned often.<sup>63</sup> To remind the English nation, *The Times* again predicted an imminent war between France and Russia. However, although these reports became prominent, *The Times* was quick to note the “premature” nature of such accusations with Austria still an issue the French had to approach.<sup>64</sup> This being said, *The Times* knew the future of Russian and French relations but also stated that Napoleon had other issues to address before, including a solution to his issues with

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<sup>59</sup> *The Times*, January 18, 1809.

<sup>60</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 87.

<sup>61</sup> Muir, 91.

<sup>62</sup> Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon’s Military Campaigns*, 137.

<sup>63</sup> *The Times*, September 8, 1809.

<sup>64</sup> *The Times*, September 8, 1809.

Austria before an assault on Russia would be possible. However, like the rest of Europe and the world, Napoleon was essentially allowed free reign. A year later, *The Times* complained about Napoleon.

In November 1810, only a month before Russia would stop agreeing to follow the Napoleonic Continental System due to Russia's trade connections with England, *The Times* emphasized the belief that Napoleon's intentions were to solely benefit the French nation. Napoleon had purposefully destroyed British subject property in the form of shipping boats.<sup>65</sup> This measure turned *The Times* from a news report to a vengeance seeking public device. On Napoleon, in this same article, it is stated: "He hates, mortally hates, our entire nation; man, woman, and child...He would equally exult, we are persuaded, in hearing that one half of the British metropolis was burned to cinders, or swept away by an inundation of the Thames."<sup>66</sup> These feelings would simply increase once the invasion of Russia began. Napoleon with his multiple military fronts wore on the French people.<sup>67</sup> The British were a nation of laws, where its citizens respected private property, which were the foundation of personal rights and liberty. The French, by contrast, as exemplified by Napoleon, who famously described the English as a 'nation of shop-keepers,' failed to understand the true basis of democracy. *The Times* seemed to be suggesting that a leader and people who destroyed the property of others were dangerously radical and unpredictable. Combined with the earlier article, a picture of the French was emerging of a people easily swayed, prone to violence and destruction, and thus fundamentally unstable. With Napoleon as France's leader, this put all of Europe at risk.

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<sup>65</sup> *The Times*, November 26, 1810.

<sup>66</sup> *The Times*, November 26, 1810.

<sup>67</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 176.

The end of 1810 had Napoleon back to his Peninsula campaign, with Portugal once again dominating his military activities.<sup>68</sup> During French preparations the following year (1811), *The Times* was relatively quiet on Napoleonic mentions in their paper at the beginning of the year since the British relations at home governmentally were more pressing and lasted through the year.<sup>69</sup> Including the upcoming War of 1812 between the English and the United States on the horizon, the English had many efforts on the world stage to concern themselves with, pushing the Napoleonic efforts at bay even if only temporarily. Thus, as the French built up forces for their next excursion into Russian territory, the English looked abroad for their conflict with the United States.

The writings on France and Russia had only just begun. However, many points are worthy of note within *The Times* reports and articles from 1806 to 1811. Some themes come to prominence and soon become repetitive from the paper. For instance, although clearly anti-Napoleon most of the time, if an issue arose that they agreed with Napoleon, a reluctant article would be put forth revealing such. But, these incidents were few and far between as seen in the English notes on events with a clear pro-Russian approach even using purely Russian sources to gather their information. Even more enlightening were *The Times* detailed descriptions of the French character, which defamed almost every element of the French populace.

The English opinion of the French leading to the Napoleonic invasion of Russia set the stage for their future in written word. The only major difference would be that the English were in the middle of war in 1812. By the end of 1811, the British were at a political and military crisis. The British knew at this point that Napoleon's hold on Europe was one that, in general, all on the continent hated yet no single power had the power to challenge, especially the British,

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<sup>68</sup> Muir, 125.

<sup>69</sup> Muir, 141.



who were against a Continental blockade.<sup>70</sup> The home front's priority would decrease for a more international framework. Although, the invasion of Russia brought a spotlight even more to the main problems the English had with Napoleon and France, the nation had plenty of opportunities to stop the French from pursuing their seemingly eventual course to Russia. The English kept referring to their personal issues rather than the continental problems yet blamed the French more often than not.

*The Times* observed the growing threat to their standing in Europe. Therefore, *The Times* would cover Napoleon's next move, his invasion of Russia in 1812, extensively. To *The Times*, Napoleon's Russian campaign looked like the emperor was on his way to not only conquer Europe, but much more. If successful, how long before Napoleon targeted England? The writers of *The Times* dealt with this question in 1812.

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<sup>70</sup> Muir, 191.

CHAPTER 2

1812



James Gillray  
“The Plumb-Pudding in Danger,”<sup>71</sup>

One of the most popular works by the English artist James Gillray, here, England and France divide the world between them, but this threatened the world power of England at the time.

<sup>71</sup> James Gillray, “The Plumb-Pudding in Danger,” [www.anselm.edu](http://www.anselm.edu), accessed June 24, 2012.

Lingering tensions associated with the previously stated events, such as Cattaro and Eylau, led to the invasion of Russia by Napoleon. In the meantime, the English had their military priorities distracted by a plethora of issues such as the conflicts with America, capturing the attention of an utterly disjointed nation and populace. The English government was in a state of confusion at the beginning of 1812 with an unknown future driving many decisions. Napoleon, however, set his sights on Russia and Great Britain was no longer a primary concern.<sup>72</sup> The English watched the chaos in Eastern Europe from afar with keen interest. *The Times* perspective sheds a unique point of view of the invasion in that the political elite writing for the paper transformed the opinion of the English populace.

*The Times'* articles on the French invasion of Russia in 1812 are divisible into three sections: the Battles of Smolensk and Borodino, in August and September respectively; French troops in Russia during October; and the French retreat from Russia from October onwards. A background into the months preceding is necessary to see the French development into war with Russia, as England and the world watched. At the beginning of 1812, the English government experienced great change with top positions directly under the king changing.<sup>73</sup> Spencer Perceval became the only Prime Minister in British history to be assassinated in May 1812. With the English focused on saving their government, the Napoleonic build-up of forces a waterway away was something the English noticed but did not act upon. Napoleon constantly added troops to his army with the nations in an alliance with the emperor essentially forced to contribute to the French military. Thus, a majority of the troops marching into Russia were not of French origin yet were fully under Napoleon's control.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 198.

<sup>73</sup> Muir, 193.

<sup>74</sup> Owen Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 150.

Prior to the invasion, Napoleon tried to forge a peace with the English, an implicit admission of failure after he indirectly attacked the nation throughout his tenure, specifically with the Continental System. In April 1812, Napoleon offered the English a peace agreement, with ulterior motives, in order to complete his preparations for a major military advancement into Russia.<sup>75</sup> However, much like the previous peace offerings from Napoleon, the English government saw through the attempt as purely beneficial to the French and saw no immediate reason to sign an agreement with the French leader. Napoleon's mind never left Russia. Thus, deprioritizing the Peninsular War, a fight for the Iberian Peninsula, in order to allow the French to devote a bulk of their attention and time to the Russian invasion led to significant troop reductions in the Peninsula. Yet, the Peninsula remained the central focus of the English.<sup>76</sup> With English and French resolve on relations seemingly set, the ending for 1812 was in place as both sides prepared for military issues.

Meanwhile, the changes in Napoleon's personal life affected his attitudes on the military front as well. The French leader divorced and strategically remarried a relative to the Austrian throne to cement his status over Europe, as well as a male heir.<sup>77</sup> Napoleon started to resemble a shell of his former military leader self often not remaining on the battlefield with his soldiers, but his former glories gained him the support needed to have the military follow him into Russia. Despite the strict control Napoleon placed on his conquered territories, the cracks in his leadership pressed Napoleon to remain victorious in war maneuvers.<sup>78</sup> The Napoleon heading into Russia looked different and wanted a vast control of areas he could not easily contain within his realm.

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<sup>75</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 198.

<sup>76</sup> Muir, 199.

<sup>77</sup> Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns*, 151.

<sup>78</sup> Connelly, 153.

The main events of 1812 in Russia occurred in the second half of the year, from October onwards. The English fought the Americans while Napoleon invaded Russia, the one nation that he always saw as the next logical step for French expansion. Even without direct involvement, the English knew the results of the Napoleonic campaign could change the entire dynamic of the current European system.<sup>79</sup> Thus, when the first major battle of Russia occurred at Smolensk, located in western Russia, in mid August, *The Times* reported on the incident by the first of September. *The Times* had difficulty reporting about Smolensk because of the lack of sources.

*The Times* published accounts of the Smolensk battle by basing articles on the reporting of other newspapers. The sense in Smolensk was that the battle began a greater war and reports from Russia noted such a feeling.<sup>80</sup> Another piece of information *The Times* shared with the public on Smolensk was the issue of Napoleon not being alongside his troops, which was out of the normal character for the emperor, subtly implying the point that the leader was not up to his normal military activities and, therefore, was in no condition to have such a direct control over the continent. The information published on September 1 hardly discussed the Smolensk battle, but the battle would be addressed again in *The Times* in October.

On October 7, a firsthand account filled *The Times* on the actions leading from Smolensk to Borodino. The actions of Napoleon and the French during this time hindered any future action in the region.<sup>81</sup> Also, noted was that after Smolensk, Napoleon concentrated his military forces, which was a more defensive measure.<sup>82</sup> At this point, the future of the French in the region, at least according to *The Times'* source, was bleak, although throughout the next couple of months this prediction would be revised. Smolensk was essentially a lost cause for Napoleon. He tried

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<sup>79</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 220.

<sup>80</sup> *The Times*, September 1, 1812.

<sup>81</sup> *The Times*, October 7, 1812.

<sup>82</sup> *The Times*, October 7, 1812.

to defeat the Russians on multiple fronts.<sup>83</sup> Many see this failure as the beginning of Napoleon's loss on the Russian front. The Russians strategically fled the area in order to lure the French into following into the center of the nation.<sup>84</sup> The French continued in Russia to their next battle of Borodino, a present day suburb of Moscow.

Just three weeks after Smolensk, on September 7, 1812, both forces met at Borodino. Napoleon prepped his soldiers with a rousing promotion of victory before battle.<sup>85</sup> However, Napoleon would not actively participate in the battle due to illness, forcing the leader to be even more indecisive than in past battles.<sup>86</sup> Napoleon's mistake in not pursuing the enemy allowed the Russians to flee the field, leaving the results questionable, with both sides claiming victory. Napoleon assumed since the Russians fled, he won. The Russians thought the exact opposite, since their army was still intact at a cost, with over 40,000 Russia troops lost and approximately 30,000 French, including almost 50 generals dead.<sup>87</sup> Although the Russian numbers of dead are generally acknowledged as accurate, the French lost as little as 7,000 dead with 20,000 wounded, combining to create the 30,000 casualties mentioned previously.<sup>88</sup> Although the battle took place in September, it would take *The Times* a while to report on France's loss.

The battle of Borodino was on September 7, 1812. Borodino's occurrence pushed forward the systematic destruction of the French military. The main reports in *The Times* came out in a detailed analysis in January of the following year. *The Times* started its analysis in January 30, on current writings of Napoleon's affairs over Europe giving some current acknowledgement to the repercussions of the event they detailed on the next pages. At this

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<sup>83</sup> Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns*, 164.

<sup>84</sup> Digby Smith, *The Greenhill Napoleonic Wars Date Book: Actions and losses in Personnel, Colours, Standards, and Artillery, 1792-1815* (London: Greenhill Books, 1998), 388.

<sup>85</sup> Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns*, 167.

<sup>86</sup> Connelly, 169.

<sup>87</sup> Connelly, 171.

<sup>88</sup> Smith, *The Greenhill Napoleonic Wars Date Book: Actions and losses in Personnel, Colours, Standards, and Artillery, 1792-1815*, 391.

point, Napoleon had lost the bulk of his men in battle and had almost nothing left to lose, the once great emperor was desperately holding onto what power he had while his “actual power” proceeded through a “violent diminution.”<sup>89</sup> *The Times* at this time published exactly what the English writers had aimed to publish. Starting with a systematic critique of Napoleon’s measures and their damage throughout Europe, *The Times* then stated the English political elite’s opinion on what the results in a Napoleon-free Europe should look like based in large part on the English ideas of society at the time. A “restitution of national security and independence” was to be born along with the “old system of Europe,” that Napoleon had systematically torn apart.<sup>90</sup> *The Times* urged the British government to take action against Napoleon at this juncture, a key variance from the earlier instances of simply defaming Napoleon and France’s character in various ways.

After this juxtaposition of strong opinions, *The Times* furthermore outlined the Battle of Borodino in detail adding the repercussions of Napoleon’s mistake, something *The Times* could not have done at an earlier time. This was important in the sense that the English elite called on action from the English government to take charge in a post-Napoleonic world. Even at the time, the writers seemingly knew the importance of this battle in leading to Napoleon’s downfall: “This battle is among the most memorable of the occurrences of what we may now describe as the late Russian war.”<sup>91</sup> *The Times* went so far as to note the battle “as an omen of the issue of future conflicts between the French and the Russians.”<sup>92</sup> *The Times* had some insight into the events that unfolded from October on to come to that conclusion. In this instance, *The Times* did its best at a news report without a large amount of opinion and starts the article with the basic

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<sup>89</sup> *The Times*, January 30, 1813.

<sup>90</sup> *The Times*, January 30, 1813.

<sup>91</sup> *The Times*, January 30, 1813.

<sup>92</sup> *The Times*, January 30, 1813.

facts. This was a change, yet *The Times* reverted to using opinion in reporting and during the 1812 invasion used a correspondent published and promoted throughout St. Petersburg.

The primary source, Sir Robert Wilson, reported many points of importance on the Battle of Borodino. A noted point was that the Russian troops fled when Napoleon decided to fight, which varied from Napoleon's strategy at Smolensk.<sup>93</sup> Much of the rest of the correspondent's information detailed the battle and military strategy. The value in the source was the general discussion of events and the description of the victory, which in this account the Russians won. Wilson explored the similarities between Borodino and the earlier battle in Napoleon's career at Eylau. As mentioned, the connection is intriguing since at the time both sides claimed Eylau as a victory while neither truly won the affair. The Eylau comparison is an argument for Wilson to note the differences between the two events, however; a key point pressed upon was that Eylau was a "parade battle" and the stakes and battle in general at Borodino were much greater in this "battle of points."<sup>94</sup> Eylau's repercussions also were less severe. At Eylau, no victor meant the next move for Napoleon was undecided, whereas Wilson states, "Borodino accelerated the loss of Moscow" and he labeled Borodino the more "decisive" of the two battles.<sup>95</sup> Later, in October 1813, *The Times* adds to the overall sentiments of these articles from January. *The Times* goes so far as to state that "Smolonsk and Borodino [...] prove, that with inferior forces, he [Napoleon] can be resisted and beaten; and that, consequently, he must be beaten with equal forces, and destroyed with superior ones."<sup>96</sup> This was an eloquently put opinion of the British elite in written word. They would continue to publish and write on Napoleon's demise.

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<sup>93</sup> *The Times*, January 30, 1813.

<sup>94</sup> *The Times*, January 30, 1813.

<sup>95</sup> *The Times*, January 30, 1813.

<sup>96</sup> *The Times*, October 23, 1813.



From Borodino onwards, the end was seemingly imminent for Napoleon and his troops. Despite the struggles and trials of the French to get there, Napoleon finally forced his way into Moscow on September 14.<sup>97</sup> Napoleon had an easy trip after Borodino since the Russian military left the capital to the French. If Napoleon had not been so determined to take the capital, or staying longer than necessary in order to get Tsar Alexander's attention, the French could have claimed victory. Although the French had made it to Moscow, the hardest fight Napoleon's troops would face was off the battlefield, in the fight for survival over the next two months.

In wars past, Napoleon allowed his troops to live off the lands conquered. However, Moscow was different from most lands in the fact that the Russians would plunder their own nation in order to prevent others from taking supplies. The people of Moscow had left food but in having supplies, the French did not organize the supplies well, making what was available disappear all too soon, causing the number of soldier deaths to rise, a number that would not stop rising until the men were back in France.<sup>98</sup> Another key factor was the fire in Moscow that consumed the city in flames the day the French arrival in the city. To this day, the cause is still unknown, but fault tends to lie with the French. The destruction of Moscow hindered the French ability to stay successfully in the capital. However, Napoleon stayed on in the belief that the tsar could not live without controlling his capital city; little did Napoleon know he would not budge to Napoleon's whims in his home nation giving the tsar an advantage over Napoleon for the first time.

As winter approached, *The Times* increased its coverage of the goings-on in Russia for the public to read. October 1812 was a month filled with events on both the English home front

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<sup>97</sup> Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns*, 171.

<sup>98</sup> Connelly, 173.

and the French on the Russian front. Times in Moscow were changing as Napoleon and French measures were leaving the military lingering within the capital. The English and Napoleon would soon learn that the extended stay in Moscow would be a disastrous one on a multitude of levels.

On October 3, *The Times* detailed yet another French/Russian battle. Issues that the writer of this *Times* article detailed included the attempt by Napoleon to place his “French principles” onto the Russian people whose reaction was supposed “indignation.”<sup>99</sup> *The Times* implied that the Russians, much like the English, did not appreciate the tyrannical control of the French. Also on this date, the English writer seemingly acknowledged the French takeover of Russia believing this from a “private letter” dated from the end of the previous month.<sup>100</sup> The French letter swayed *The Times* to state a belief that the Russian sought after peace. *The Times* not only published this but added that on to the letter with ideas as “they [the French] know that a confident prophecy frequently produces its own completion.”<sup>101</sup> Rather surprisingly, this English writer, incorrectly as it turned out, bowed to a man the newspaper had previously titled a tyrant. This time, though, the tyrant would fail.

For the next weeks, the news of the French in Moscow produced continuous articles in *The Times*. Throughout this period, the character attacks on Napoleon continued with *The Times* commenting that, “he is despicably ignorant of a human heart.”<sup>102</sup> On reports of Moscow’s destruction, the number of troops killed up to this point was then put in context: “For what is the flower of the French population dragged to the frozen regions of the North?-That they may enable a Demon in human shape, while his laying a noble city in ashes, and pouring forth blood

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<sup>99</sup> *The Times*, October 3, 1812.

<sup>100</sup> *The Times*, October 3, 1812

<sup>101</sup> *The Times*, October 3, 1812.

<sup>102</sup> *The Times*, October 12, 1812.

like the great waters, to proclaim himself the benefactor of mankind?”<sup>103</sup> In placing such a phrase in *The Times*, the writer shows that although the English disagreed with the leadership of France and his decisions, the importance of a human life can not be underestimated. *The Times* is showing Napoleon as misusing his power for personal gains. Thus, Napoleon destroyed the French and the people he conquered. Even in the midst of two countries warring with one another and a nation’s capital burned to the ground, the British undermined both thoughts in showing they still had a heart after pledging a few days earlier that Napoleon had none. Throughout late October, the focus in *The Times* remained on the Russia and the devastation of Moscow until the English writers turned to other Russian issues. *The Times* is attempting to express the irony in that Napoleon claimed to represent the ideals of the French Revolution and saw himself as a great progressive, all the while destroying a foreign city and his own people. Thus, Napoleon destroyed all in the name of progress.

By October 24th, all could note the destruction throughout the city but also the failing of Napoleon’s troops that the wear of war had led to. *The Times* writers believed this was a sign against “the wicked subverters of all law, of all private freedom, and of all national independence” in for once, French plans had not held together as planned.<sup>104</sup> Again, here the law-conscious British elite mentioned the need for law and the lawlessness of Napoleon during his reign would never be leadership they could support. Ironically, on the day of this *Times* article describing these Russian killings by the French, the French had lost at Malo Jaroslawetz, an outcome that finally convinced Napoleon that he could not stay in Moscow. Here, the Russians not only thoroughly defeated the French but also forced the French to begin a retreat to

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<sup>103</sup> *The Times*, October 15, 1812.

<sup>104</sup> *The Times*, October 24, 1812.

Smolensk, which had been plundered and destroyed by the summer.<sup>105</sup> Yet, by the end of the month, the English writers had gone from a lack of accurate details to reports of the French in Moscow on October 26 to only a day later optimistically reporting on the French leaving the Russian nation altogether. However, Napoleon remained in Russia until mid December although the French had begun their journey from the capital back to Smolensk in a slow retreat on October 19th in order to get out of Russia before winter.<sup>106</sup>

In October of 1812, *The Times* seemingly remained on the topics at hand in the war and military measures. In order to get a grasp on the reasoning behind English writers and French actions during the Russian invasion, a brief background to the retreat besides the actual military actions as many have been mentioned, actions within and outside of Russia are necessary to denote. As such, the British were in the midst of the War of 1812 with the Americans, which meant no matter the issue with other European nations, if the British were not directly involved as in this war, the importance declined significantly. Simply, the war the British were fighting with the Americans benefited neither side. The war was nothing more than “a tiresome, pointless distraction for Britain; a nuisance, but not a serious threat.”<sup>107</sup> Nonetheless, the war was still another issue the British had to deal with along with the Napoleonic threat. While the English writers dealt with their military from afar, Napoleon was on the front with his troops trying to leave Moscow. However, *The Times* remained a keen observer to Napoleon’s retreat.

Articles in *The Times* on the French invasion came at the end of 1812 when the retreat was in full effect. The articles in this period can be categorized at a time when the British writers finally not only expressed their opinions but also would add insight into Napoleon. Once the retreat slowly began out of Russia, the mood of the French soldiers had transformed into a

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<sup>105</sup> Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon’s Military Campaigns*, 175.

<sup>106</sup> Connelly, 174.

<sup>107</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 240.

different group of men unrecognizable from their journey into the nation only months before. As winter descended upon Russia and the French troops, desperation seeped through the ranks causing men to behave in manners that they would normally never do otherwise. The men leaving were starving, homesick, and lacked effective leadership for their way home transforming these soldiers into skeletons of their former selves in more way than one. Thus, by the middle of November, when *The Times* reported on some incidents of a seemingly “atrocious” nature, the paper reported the news to gain the attention of the readers.<sup>108</sup> Napoleon ordered executions of Russian subjects for simply following the tsar’s orders. *The Times* writers emphasized the lack of overall morals of Napoleon based on this incident: “The Monster [...] has dared, in impious mockery of the forms of justice, to bring to trial, to condemn and execute, certain Russian subjects.”<sup>109</sup> This quote directly implies that the French were not only wrong in this situation, but that their ideas on justice in general were not the English way and essentially wrong.

Once the tide in Moscow turned and the French had fled, the mood in *The Times* changed as well. A day after reporting the nature of the French killing with no trial per Napoleon’s request, *The Times* reported of Moscow being freed of the French presence and Russian once more.<sup>110</sup> With this news, *The Times* at occasions even felt sorry for the French nation. *The Times* admitted that it presented “a cool and temperate view” and that such a presentation was “no easy task.”<sup>111</sup> The writer seemed happy with the reports of a fleeing French army. Such joy comes forth in the article specifically in that Napoleon was given a compliment on his “spirit” this day yet, Napoleon gained the title of monster only a day prior and would be titled the

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<sup>108</sup> *The Times*, November 11, 1812.

<sup>109</sup> *The Times*, November 11, 1812.

<sup>110</sup> *The Times*, November 12, 1812.

<sup>111</sup> *The Times*, November 12, 1812.

“Corsican robber” only a week later.<sup>112</sup> The writers in *The Times* wrote their opinions without the threat of a strong Napoleonic response, free from any fear they could lash out at the broken leader.

Only a day later, on November 13, the French had finally made it back to Smolensk. *The Times* would continue to cover the retreat and assumed the next step of the French based off reports received from the field. As such, by late November, *The Times* predicted the next move for the French in a retreat through Poland losing most of the sick and weary soldiers along the journey.<sup>113</sup> They would be correct although they were going on a presumption. In addition, *The Times* once again hoped to renew a European continent that once was glorious without the dominance of one man or nation.<sup>114</sup> By the end of November, the French soldiers were starving, hoping merely to get home and eat something besides their own horses. The English, on the other hand, were gaining hope in the idea of Napoleon’s possible loss and even more so, the emperor’s complete overthrow.

December 1812 came about with the English and the French ending the year with different mindsets than just even months earlier. The English had started a war of their own in 1812, which consumed a vast amount of their time and resources along with a bulk of their writings in *The Times*. Thus, the news reported was usually of some value to them. The French, on the other hand, started the year with one of the greatest empires in modern history along with a leader who most French supported since he had been almost undefeated. For the French, and especially Napoleon, in order to keep the empire they gained, the nation had to win more battles and more land.

Reports from *The Times* through December showed a dramatic shift in *Times* tone of

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<sup>112</sup> *The Times*, November 12 and 21, 1812.

<sup>113</sup> *The Times*, November 21, 1812.

<sup>114</sup> *The Times*, November 21, 1812.

writing when the English felt more comfortable in attacks on Napoleon in various measures. On December 7, 1812, *The Times* reported on the news of hearing about Napoleon's death only to retract the statement in the next sentence.<sup>115</sup> The newspaper mentioning this and then retracting it shows their goal of trying to report, but also in doing so showing their true elation in the prospect of Napoleon's death. Adding to this point, *The Times* intercepted Napoleon's correspondence and used the emperor's words against him in that these messages "confirm the destitute state of his army, and at the same time expose the artifices to which he resorts, to deceive the Continent."<sup>116</sup> *The Times* based this assumption on military means and inward fighting promoted in these found documents.<sup>117</sup> After attacking Napoleon in this manner, *The Times* a day later attacked the French media. *The Times* stated the French papers were "glossing over a tale" toward the end of the Russian retreat.<sup>118</sup> From this point on, *The Times* writing would become even stronger in a stance against Napoleon as the news of his imminent downfall in Europe.

As December waned on, the resolve in *The Times* on the eventual downfall of Napoleon on the continent grew. In the December 17 issue, the writer teased the reader with their hopes for the meaning to a French loss to Russia, "in speaking of the successes of the Russian, we are obliged to abate the excess of joy [...] from mere apprehension."<sup>119</sup> Although titled a "detested and detestable tyrant," *The Times* refrained from acknowledging Napoleon's complete defeat but remained on the point the French had lost in Russia.<sup>120</sup> *The Times* had much to celebrate in relation to Napoleon, however, as the emperor's titles now included "conquered" and a

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<sup>115</sup> *The Times*, December 7, 1812.

<sup>116</sup> *The Times*, December 10, 1812.

<sup>117</sup> *The Times*, December 10, 1812.

<sup>118</sup> *The Times*, December 11, 1812.

<sup>119</sup> *The Times*, December 17, 1812.

<sup>120</sup> *The Times*, December, 17, 1812.

“fugitive.”<sup>121</sup> *The Times* noted these opinions prior to the actual coverage of events. Again, the writer chose to defame Napoleon’s character in the leader’s prevention of mentioned “human rights.”<sup>122</sup> French action during November follows these points with emphasis placed on an action on the 17<sup>th</sup> that forged future action. As the end of the year approached, the English gained more hope in the idea of achieving Napoleon the prisoner over Napoleon the emperor.

Only days later on December 21, 1812, Napoleon disappeared for a time leading to *The Times* questioning if the leader died. Although purely speculative and written as such, the writer detailed a world free of Napoleon and how his death would transform the continent for the better. The unknown mortality of Napoleon left many options for *The Times*: “The death of Buonaparte however, would break the talisman which holds the Continent spell-bound; the French nation would indubitably awake to justice, to a sense of its rights and its duties. Peace-a secure, and honourable, a general, and in all human probability, a lasting peace-would be the immediate result of such an event.”<sup>123</sup> Additionally, at to this point, *The Times* believed the Russian campaign had sealed his fate, and he could not return to Russia.<sup>124</sup> Thusly, *The Times* ended the year on a positive thought that the continent they adored would return to one of many nations working together for common goals rather than one country aiming to control the others. 1812 brought both the British and the French into war. However, although the British remained in their war with America, the French ended their year with a retreat from Russia, a devastation beyond compare and essentially leaderless for the first time since kings ruled the land.

1812 transformed the face of Europe for the next hundred years. When the French left Russia, the retreat broke the France known since the overthrow of the French monarchy in 1789.

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<sup>121</sup> *The Times*, December 17, 1812.

<sup>122</sup> *The Times*, December 17, 1812.

<sup>123</sup> *The Times*, December 21, 1812.

<sup>124</sup> *The Times*, December 21, 1812.



The British finally had regained some central power in Europe. 1815 started a new period for the French in regards to power because they had none. Russia had destroyed the last remnants of France as an empire and the control shift was one the English would embrace in order to promote their nation and then, Europe in the long run. The Congress of Vienna's meeting set the continent up for the next century without a Napoleon. The French leader would come back for another coup, but the English under Wellington would have a proper response for the ex-emperor. All of these issues *The Times* would notice.

Napoleon had started the year with the confidence of the French military and populace behind him. By December, the leader had no country and no military backing him causing him to have no sources to help him keep his control over the region. The French and the whole continent of Europe were all too ready to rethink this emperor's leadership in order to bring some calmness to Europe. The Russian invasion led directly to Napoleon's downfall, yet there was almost no way for him around the invasion in order to hold his control over the world. Without Russia, Napoleon would have never felt comfortable with a grasp over Europe. Yet with an attempt at Russia, Napoleon lost his control over the world in one military maneuver. Throughout all of this, *The Times* writing garnered opinions and thus, started to have a distinct English voice that Napoleon's downfall exemplified. *The Times* wrote a sonnet to Napoleon's downfall in Russia and would continue to put their obsession with the man from Corsica on full display in the years following his Russian defeat.

## CHAPTER 3

### “...TO RECORD THE DOWNFALL OF TYRANNY”: THE DEMISE OF NAPOLEON THROUGH THE WRITINGS OF *THE TIMES*

Napoleon's strategic mistakes in Russia led to his permanent downfall as France's emperor. The French followed Napoleon throughout the world, even as the news of Russia's crushing victory sunk into France, the French tried to keep their faith in their leader. Through the Napoleonic wars, the nation lost a vast amount of their young men leaving a permanent mark on French society. The French had gone from one of the most powerful and influential nations under Napoleon to being neither after Napoleon's defeat. By 1815, the final defeat of Napoleon was seemingly imminent. *The Times* continued to cover Napoleon's demise.

One can divide how *The Times* covered Napoleon's downfall into three sections. From 1813 to 1818, *The Times* published several articles on his defeat and the subsequent legacy. The first section included reports on Napoleon's losses to his time at Elba. The second section concerned itself with the reports in regards to Napoleon's final surrender, in which one can see almost a gleeful approach to the reporting. *The Times* openly celebrated the end of the emperor. The last section covered Napoleon's health and is notable for how *The Times* indulged itself in reporting the death of the disgraced emperor. *The Times* started to recognize Napoleon's demise long before the emperor himself did.

When the last French soldiers left Russia on December 4, 1812, Napoleon saw his empire crumbling, but unlike the rest of Europe, which plotted an overthrow, Napoleon held hope that his empire's existence could continue.<sup>125</sup> Europe, outside of France, saw an opportunity in this moment of Napoleon's greatest weakness. *The Times* used Napoleon's failing to its written advantage and allowed personal feelings of the emperor to permeate the reporting of events. In

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<sup>125</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 243.

not having governmental restrictions, unlike many other papers, *The Times* did not practice written word diplomacy, instead the paper published opinion pieces filled with joy over the Napoleonic demise.

Throughout the beginning of 1813, *The Times* focused its attention on the faults and mistakes made during Napoleon's reign. With Napoleon's loss in Russia, leading to the prospect of the emperor losing his empire, *The Times* interpreted a power shift in Europe. Newspapers were a means for the English elite to exploit the opportunity of a potential grand alliance against Napoleon. In order to attain an alliance, however, agreement in distaste for Napoleon needed a firm basis in multiple nations. To add to their point, *The Times* in the opening days 1813, used French newspapers as a key resource in their writings, which at this point were filled with distaste toward Napoleon. Therefore, if the French showed distaste for their emperor, *The Times* could freely argue for an overthrow and subsequently unite the readership behind this idea. The information from French papers caused *The Times* to note a hate for the emperor at home giving the English the means to start promoting an actual overthrow, not just a mention in a newspaper.<sup>126</sup> Much written for the remainder of January 1813 focused on past military measures and over-dramatized discussions of the French defeat.

By January 22, 1813, *The Times* included descriptions of many of the final events of the French forces in Russia. However, besides *The Times* berating Napoleon's moral character and general lawlessness, the newspaper included a correspondence note from the field written for the paper.<sup>127</sup> Napoleon had left his army during the Russian retreat in an attempt to stabilize his empire from Paris. Yet, to *Times* readers, Napoleon's actions seemed as though he fled the field and his troops for France and thus, deserved the title of deserter, giving the English an additional

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<sup>126</sup> *The Times*, January 13, 1813.

<sup>127</sup> *The Times*, January 22, 1813.

issue to attack Napoleon. The correspondent for *The Times* in this article emphasized the image of Napoleon as a deserter and promoted the idea to the English public throughout the article. Above the phrases regularly used to describe Napoleon, including tyrant, the correspondent acknowledged the hope that Napoleon's historical significance might serve: "the peculiar duty of history to inflict, or to record; a punishment which may convince all other men who may be tempted with a similar desire of universal dominion, that the career of violence and injustice is short, and that nothing is truly valuable and permanent but justice, benevolence, and integrity."<sup>128</sup> The correspondent also made the argument in comparing Napoleon to past leaders. However, while the correspondent displayed seriousness in his critique, *The Times* soon adopted a different tone.

As time progressed, Napoleon's name became a joke when *The Times* used the term "Buonaparte" as a belittling term.<sup>129</sup> Napoleon and his troops trudged through Warsaw on February 13<sup>th</sup> and the event was published less than two weeks later. Here, Napoleon gave a proclamation complimenting his soldiers' "valour and perseverance." Yet, above the proclamation being published, opinions on Napoleon seeped into the article as priority over the news reporting: "Let the admirers of Buonaparte, if any persons are yet so weak as to admire him, compare this modest and yet diguified address, with any of the inflated harangues or manifestos of their vain idol."<sup>130</sup> On top of their distaste for Napoleon and his followers, *The Times* implied the French people worshipped Napoleon without thinking on their own. This belittling of the French now became the primary tone by the English elite writing for *The Times*. By March 1813, the Paris papers quoted in *The Times* promoted Napoleon's desperation in attaining no recent victory and "no striking achievement of the French armies," along with no

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<sup>128</sup> *The Times*, January 22, 1813.

<sup>129</sup> *The Times*, February 4, 1813.

<sup>130</sup> *The Times*, February 25, 1813.

clear war action on the horizon.<sup>131</sup> The lack of Napoleonic action showed him in a state he previously never dealt with, leadership without war. By March, “Buonaparte’s distressed situation” led to an armistice with his enemies on the horizon to “surprise and unexpected joy on the defeat of the Tyrant.”<sup>132</sup> Besides belittling the French and celebrating Napoleon’s downfall, the political elite writing for *The Times* saw a way to advance their own agenda.

During the late months of 1813, the English government saw an opportunity to garner something from the Russian-led peace agreement with Napoleon even if the English had no direct engagement with the process or Napoleon’s defeat in Russia. However, with almost no involvement during the Napoleonic Wars, the English opinion mattered little in armistice discussions.<sup>133</sup> A supposed “armistice” that followed and which renewal caused the English much distress found its way into *The Times*. In the report on the armistice on July 22, 1813, the English predicted its failure. The renewal would “prove more ruinous to the Allies, than the commencement of the war.”<sup>134</sup> The events that followed this prediction proved it quite right with the Allies greatest fight against Napoleon coming to fruition months later in October 1813. The English elite struggled to find a voice in the post-Napoleonic world.

The English elite predicted a battle for the whole of Europe. Those in control of England’s political power seized the opportunity to use the means within their power to indirectly challenge Napoleon. The English, attending to the war in America, still supported their European allies with materials, finances, and troops in order to fight against their combined French foe.<sup>135</sup> In August 1813, Napoleon fought against a majority of Europe in a battle for the

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<sup>131</sup> *The Times*, March 1, 1813.

<sup>132</sup> *The Times*, March 1, 1813.

<sup>133</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 257.

<sup>134</sup> *The Times*, July 22, 1813.

<sup>135</sup> Christopher D. Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War 1803-15* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 200.

continent's future. Napoleon's previous campaigns often pitted him against a single nation's force, making the combination of forces, specifically at Leipzig, a unique situation for the leader.<sup>136</sup> After the devastation to his troop numbers during the Russian campaign, Napoleon mustered troops for the impending battle through alliances and conscription efforts. As Napoleon gathered troops, his European rivals gained an additional ally in Austria's choice to also fight the emperor.<sup>137</sup>

The great battle for the continent occurred at Leipzig, Germany, from October 16th to the 19th, 1813, with a majority of Europe, the Allies, against Napoleon.<sup>138</sup> Napoleon's efforts in the battle only lasted four days. The emperor's reign effectively ended after Leipzig.<sup>139</sup> Napoleon's loss at Leipzig culminated his troubles and quick decline thereafter. The emperor fled to Paris in an attempt to stabilize his rule. But Napoleon faced the issue of his troops spread thin throughout Europe without any specific duty or orders.<sup>140</sup> Napoleon's military problems simply exemplified the political overthrow on the horizon. However, Napoleon decided not to accept an agreement, even though it allowed him to retain some power. In early November, the Allies presented Napoleon the opportunity to maintain power in France while retaining France's natural borders in exchange for peace. The Allies wanted this to calm the situation in Europe without throwing the continent into a confused state due to the uncertainty of France's future.<sup>141</sup> Yet, Napoleon declined the offer, leaving few other options but an Allied invasion of France at the end of 1813.

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<sup>136</sup> Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns*, 183.

<sup>137</sup> Connelly, 188.

<sup>138</sup> Connelly, 192.

<sup>139</sup> Connelly, 194.

<sup>140</sup> Connelly, 194.

<sup>141</sup> Connelly, 194.

The English remained removed from direct involvement in the Napoleonic issues at this time although, as mentioned, they contributed in any means necessary just as *The Times* continued to note the events to the populace in a surge of Napoleonic news within the paper. The Allies marched into France on December 29, 1813. In the beginning, Napoleon successfully garnered multiple victories against his foe, but these victories only lasted for a short while, and the emperor was forced to “abdicated unconditionally” by April 6, 1814.<sup>142</sup> *The Times* reported on this event in exultation on April 9th, three days later. Without any introduction, *The Times* exclaimed: “This day repays the labour of many years. [...] we have to record the downfall of Tyranny, the deserved punishment of ambition! Buonaparte *has ceased* to reign.”<sup>143</sup> The details followed in accordance. But, even in the midst of celebration, *The Times* logically thought ahead to the future of French leadership. The paper assures “that the Constitution must have a Monarch at its head, or that that Monarch must be a Bourbon.”<sup>144</sup> The writer of the article not only acknowledges the Bourbons but seemingly supports them in their endeavors at French leadership. *The Times* once again displayed political rhetoric and mingled in foreign affairs. Support of a monarchy should not surprise since the English elite supported a monarchical government promoting their specific English identity on the readers of England and beyond.

On April 11, 1814, *The Times* commented on Napoleon’s abdication. Although, *The Times* published Napoleon’s announcement of abdication terms, *The Times* opinion dominated the article, forcing the opinions onto the reader of *The Times*. However, the issue *The Times* opined on at this point was not Napoleon’s action but the demands he requested in abdication. *The Times* displayed outrage at a defeated leader making victor-like demands. The agreement in Napoleon’s renunciation was the following:

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<sup>142</sup> Connelly, 199.

<sup>143</sup> *The Times*, April 9, 1814.

<sup>144</sup> *The Times*, April 9, 1814.

The Allied Powers having proclaimed that the Emperor Napoleon was the only obstacle to the reestablishment of the peace of Europe, the Emperor Napoleon, *faithful to his oath*, declares that he renounces for himself and his heirs, the Thrones of France and Italy; and that there is no *personal sacrifice*, even that of life, which he is not ready to make to the interest of France.<sup>145</sup>

The problem the writer found was that these demands were “the last act of this wretch’s public life” as “the most hateful of Tyrants has finished by proving himself the most infamous of cowards.”<sup>146</sup> The writer of this article believed in a strong moral grounding in a leader, a quality Napoleon supposedly lacked, a point English identity at this point relied upon. Additionally, *The Times* placed doubt on the religious section of Napoleon’s oath especially when Napoleon’s actions being religious causing a reaction where the writer examined this point ending with three exclamation points for emphasis.<sup>147</sup> However, even after Napoleon’s surrender, *The Times* fascination with him continued.

*The Times* featured a detailed list of the rumors about Napoleon’s lifestyle once he reached the island of Elba, which to any means of the normal populace seemed outlandish, specifically his large financial stipend, a point *The Times* relished writing about to promote the idea that a fallen leader should not be able to spend lavishly. The true identity of *The Times* in the early 1800s was in the paper’s relation to the English people. The writing on Napoleon’s finances struck a chord with an English nation known for not spending unnecessarily. *The Times* here once again notes an English idea that they agree with by dismissing Napoleon at once. *The Times* used written word to advocate what the English elite believed to be the best of England life through dismissing Napoleon’s thought’s as invalid.

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<sup>145</sup> *The Times*, April 11, 1814.

<sup>146</sup> *The Times*, April 11, 1814.

<sup>147</sup> *The Times*, April 11, 1814.



The Allies provided a luxurious life for Napoleon that included sovereignty over Elba along with various titles for the former emperor and his family.<sup>148</sup> However, as the Allies worked toward exchanging Napoleon's life in France for a new one at Elba, *The Times* later in the month on April 18th reported on London's response to Napoleon's downfall, "*Peace with Buonaparte! How absurd, how chimerical, how utterly impossible.*"<sup>149</sup> This response from the common Londoner is explainable. Napoleon's grasp on Europe suffocated the continent for years. During his tenure, Napoleon's reign successfully dominated not only the European field but beyond making his defeat much harder to concede.

By May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1814, Napoleon lived on Elba.<sup>150</sup> Napoleon's changed life affected him greatly, specifically in his dramatic decline in power. Ironically, though, and a great benefit for Napoleon's attempt at another takeover of French power, including Elba's distance, was that the island remained close to not only his birth location of Corsica but additionally, his true home of France. Moreover, Elba's size enjoyed mockery in British publications as they noted that now Napoleon lacked "Elba room," and compared to his empire was very small.<sup>151</sup> The mockery of such an issue would return to the English writers not long thereafter in Napoleon's march back to Paris early the following year.

The former emperor's life at Elba varied greatly from his rule in France. With little money of the pension promised to him and his inability to see family members in addition to the reports he received of the disruption his loss placed on Europe, Napoleon felt inclined to attempt to gain his power once again.<sup>152</sup> Besides a lack of resources, Napoleon's time to make a move

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<sup>148</sup> Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns*, 200.

<sup>149</sup> *The Times*, April 18, 1814.

<sup>150</sup> Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns*, 200.

<sup>151</sup> David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 304.

<sup>152</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 343.

diminished with every passing day. Napoleon needed to strike when the people of France still remembered him and would follow him in his overthrow efforts, whereas the later the comeback, the more unlikely the possibility of success. Thus, only a few months into his exile, Napoleon endeavored to gain France once again.

1815 permanently ended the Napoleonic reign while also reigniting interest in Napoleon throughout *The Times* with a number of articles on the Frenchman. February 25, 1815 started Napoleon's journey to his infamous hundred-day takeover of France.<sup>153</sup> Napoleon landed in France on March 1, 1815 and headed toward Paris thereafter. The influence of Napoleon's relationship with his soldiers showed in his backing by troops at a large rate. Troops continued to follow the former emperor from his arrival in France to Paris. On the way to the capital city, an incident arose in which Napoleon's former troops had the opportunity to kill the disgraced leader, yet instead they not only spared his life, but joined the ranks under him.<sup>154</sup> As Napoleon's reassertion of power gained speed and backing, *The Times* increased the coverage and opinion on the topic. Thus, March 1815 contained much about Napoleon's movements in France even though Napoleon retained little resources in his effort, he returned to France with a takeover on his mind.<sup>155</sup>

On March 11, 1815, *The Times* remarked on Napoleon's attempt at power. *The Times* gained the knowledge of Napoleon's return the day prior to their reports being published imploring a quick response to the English readership.<sup>156</sup> The reports "of a civil war having been again kindled in France, by that wretch Buonaparte" who in his return, *The Times* added broke

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<sup>153</sup> Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns*, 202.

<sup>154</sup> Connelly, 203.

<sup>155</sup> Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It*, 305.

<sup>156</sup> *The Times*, March 11, 1815.

his abdication agreement along with the duties within it.<sup>157</sup> *The Times* in its dismissal of Napoleon bolstered the new French monarch (Louis XVIII), the Bourbon who attained the throne after Napoleon's downfall. In contrasting tone and nature of writing, after noting how King Louis termed Napoleon and his followers traitors, the paper stated about Louis, "This virtuous and excellent Monarch who, since his accession, has done so much good to the country blessed with his government."<sup>158</sup> *The Times* shared this view in a strategy against Napoleon after Napoleon's attempt at power. The English government wanted a defensive measure along the French border but believed Louis XVIII needed to prevent Napoleon from entering the French nation through his own means.<sup>159</sup>

The following week on March 18, 1815, overwhelming news reports throughout Europe baffled *The Times* in an attempt at deciphering the accounts. Thus, instead of leaving theory to chance, the paper included multiple thoughts and assumptions. Most everything at this point was based on rumors. By March 21, the movements and reports on Bonaparte settled into print.<sup>160</sup> *The Times* gathered information from a variety of sources with varying descriptions and opinions on the events making the articles disjointed and even confusing at points. On March 27, the idea of another combined Allied effort was promoted with more Allied backing in order to take the emperor away from France permanently.<sup>161</sup> Napoleon's action stayed in *The Times* throughout March, on event-by-event basis, but by the end of the hundred days, *The Times* critique of Napoleon increased. A majority of this speculation allowed the English elite to place their ideas back in the readers' minds and settled as a reminder of the benefits of the English.

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<sup>157</sup> *The Times*, March 11, 1815.

<sup>158</sup> *The Times*, March 11, 1815.

<sup>159</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 345.

<sup>160</sup> *The Times*, March 21, 1815.

<sup>161</sup> *The Times*, March 27, 1815.

While Napoleon controlled the French, the pivotal Battle of Waterloo ended Napoleon's hundred days in power followed by one of the greatest defeats in history. Many military measures led to Napoleon's meeting with the Allies at Waterloo. But, the Battle of Waterloo on June 18, 1815, remained the ultimate showdown between the French (under Napoleon) and Allied forces.<sup>162</sup> The significance of the defeat reminded the English of their importance in the realm of Europe since the Duke of Wellington, England's own, successfully defeated Napoleon after years of being denied such an honor to this point with the Peninsular campaign and the many battles of the hundred days leading to Waterloo. English soldiers composed the foundation of the troops backing Wellington at this junction making victory even more noteworthy for the English to promote their stature on the world's stage.<sup>163</sup> Both Wellington and Napoleon up to this point used defensive strategies in order to defeat opponents. However, at this battle Napoleon's position forced him to frontal attacks causing not only chaos on the field but a disorder that led to his downfall at Waterloo.<sup>164</sup>

On July 22, 1815, *The Times* reported the news they waited to share with the public since the beginning of Napoleon's reign. Napoleon's downfall once again ruined the emperor most dramatically and quickly. However, on July 22, the English reported on having the emperor in their possession but had yet to know his fate for a second time. *The Times* exaltedly created a voice for the English populace: "The ex-tyrant, the ex-rebel, is in our hands. He has delivered himself up to us; he has quitted the land, and surrendered himself upon the sea, as a man who has committed every species of crime in one country."<sup>165</sup> *The Times* reported this news after many attempts at capturing Napoleon and almost giving up on being able to seize the leader once he

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<sup>162</sup> Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns*, 211.

<sup>163</sup> Connelly, 211.

<sup>164</sup> Connelly, 214.

<sup>165</sup> *The Times*, July 22, 1815.

gained the leadership for a hundred days. The newspaper cared not what happened to the emperor and enjoyed the fact that the English successfully contained him in their realm again.

*The Times*, from July 25, 1815, planned to put all the rumors to rest in proving that the English indeed captured Napoleon in the three days following. *The Times* made this implication clear from the beginning of their article on the events at hand with the addition of their opinions on the events. *The Times* began with belittling the Frenchman: “Our paper of this day will satisfy the skeptics, for such there were beginning to be, as to the capture of that bloody miscreant who has so long tortured Europe, NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE.”<sup>166</sup> This statement only began coverage on the man’s character in their comparison with others: “Savages are always found to unite the greatest degree of cunning to the ferocious part of their nature. The cruelty of this person is written in characters of blood in almost every country of Europe, and in the contiguous angles of Africa and Asia which he visited: and nothing can more strongly evince the universal conviction of his low perfidious craft.”<sup>167</sup> After these details, *The Times* announced the news that the English had worked hard to earn and stated: “the opinion which was beginning to get abroad, that even after his capture had been officially announced in both France and England, he might yet have found means to escape. However, all doubts upon this point are at an end, by his arrival off the British coast.”<sup>168</sup> *The Times* stressed that the English played a role in taking Napoleon down.

Although those claims relayed remained unfounded, *The Times* felt the need to clarify the issue nonetheless. Even in victory, *The Times* writers’ opinions overwhelmed the information at hand necessary to share with the English readers. Following the writing of the English political elite, though, *The Times* noted the measures that needed undertaking in order to make sure those

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<sup>166</sup> *The Times*, July 25, 1815.

<sup>167</sup> *The Times*, July 25, 1815.

<sup>168</sup> *The Times*, July 25, 1815.

military lives lost at Waterloo served their ultimate purpose.<sup>169</sup> The once dominant Napoleon now not only controlled nothing, but the English chose his future course by whichever means they deemed necessary.

The English pride in the Waterloo victory filtered throughout English society.<sup>170</sup> After Napoleon's downfall, the question of placing him at another location or even putting the former emperor on trial became the question of the day. The result spared Napoleon his life, to the disappointment of *The Times*.<sup>171</sup> St. Helena finally contained Napoleon in October 1815. *The Times* mentioned the transfer of Napoleon to the island on December 5, 1815. Internment on St. Helena intentionally placed Napoleon on the other side of the world, so reporting from the island took a longer time. Thus, although Napoleon arrived at St. Helena in October, the news of the event spread in *The Times* on December 5.<sup>172</sup>

Now, with Napoleon's reign effectively over, *The Times* transformed the writing into snippets of the events at St. Helena. The final wave of Napoleonic articles in *The Times* in the early 1800s involved the issue of constant promotion of his location along with his health on St. Helena. Napoleon focused his time on writing his history.<sup>173</sup> The Napoleonic myth, though, started spreading during this time as more acknowledged the transformation this one man had on an entire nation and beyond. Due to Napoleon, European society and government modified in order to eliminate the opportunity for such a takeover by a single nation of much of Europe again.

The Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), besides attempting to solve the Napoleon issue permanently, strategically planned a balance between the European nations that would last for

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<sup>169</sup> *The Times*, July 25, 1815.

<sup>170</sup> Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815*, 374.

<sup>171</sup> *The Times*, August 12, 1815.

<sup>172</sup> *The Times*, December 5, 1815.

<sup>173</sup> Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns*, 220.

decades. Due to the stabilization the Congress promoted throughout the continent, the issues the English felt wary about in European relations were muted. Thus, *The Times* coverage of Napoleon in 1816 slowed until 1817 when belief in Napoleon's health and sometimes death often circulated in the newspaper with ideas ranging depending on the information source. Only minute issues such as the changing of Napoleon's physician made the paper reports.<sup>174</sup> Napoleon's distance from home and his family, most of whom he would never see in person again, was evident in the reports. In a note dated from June 17, 1817, and reported August 12, a recent gift "bust of his son, which afforded him much evident satisfaction."<sup>175</sup> Napoleon's life changed dramatically. Napoleon's life now consisted of billiards and dreaming of making it off the island where he remained and little did he know, he would remain throughout the end of his life.<sup>176</sup> 1817 ended with the spread of the rumor of Napoleon's death permeating throughout the continent. Even though *The Times* writer sees the idea gaining "implicit credit" with Napoleon dying by "water in the chest," the paper realizes the non-validation in these ideas make the idea more than likely false.<sup>177</sup>

1818 started with the same calm in England causing reports on Napoleon to contain little information and even less outside the normal realm of news. Primary sources wrote on many of the English guarding Napoleon. Thus, most ideas of St. Helena and Napoleon at this point came from these sources who made the long journey to the island for themselves. Thus, reports of Napoleon moving to a different house made the news.<sup>178</sup> The dramatic slowing of Napoleon's life unfolded before the English readers until his death in 1821.

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<sup>174</sup> *The Times*, August 14, 1817.

<sup>175</sup> *The Times*, August 12, 1817.

<sup>176</sup> *The Times*, August 12, 1817.

<sup>177</sup> *The Times*, December 2, 1817.

<sup>178</sup> *The Times*, July 22, 1818.

## EPILOGUE

Historians always have to ask themselves, so what? In regards to the London *Times* coverage of Napoleon's 1812 Russian invasion, this question can be answered quite simply. *The Times* sheds light on the views of one crumbling empire from the perspective of a well-established colonial power. The English political elite who wrote for *The Times* felt intimidated by the ever expanding French nation that controlled much of Europe at the time. English identity was under attack because England's influence in Europe was fading due to Napoleon's military campaigns. France stood for everything the English despised. Therefore, besides not only losing political influence over Europe, the English were also losing the battle of ideas, confusing the English political elite at large.

England saw itself as the moral superior to France at the time of Napoleon's reign. Napoleon encapsulated all that was wrong with the French nation in allowing a dictator to reign, conquer numerous territories, and threatening stability in Europe and the continent's overall existence. The English viewed themselves as the exemplary force in Europe, now a Frenchman challenged their status as such. Thus, what one can see in *The Times* coverage is a 'xenophobic' approach to Napoleon since the English feared an undermining of their power by the French. The English found themselves backed in a corner. Since the English did not have the means military, they attacked the French in written word.

Through these *Times* denunciations of Napoleon, the English hoped to retain their identity and thus, protecting England's standing throughout Europe. An analysis of this struggle is necessary in order to gain a broader appreciation of nations indirectly involved in the Napoleonic wars. Insight of Napoleon's failed invasion of Russia from *The Times'* perspective helps one understand Napoleon's image on the continent at the time. Furthermore, although the



English were fighting the Americans in 1812, *The Times* still devoted a vast amount of coverage to the events unfolding in Europe. England's influence was dead in America and they could not afford to lose it in Europe as well.

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