



The Battle of the Berezina: Napoleon's Great Escape

Alexander Mikaberidze, Christopher Summerville

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In the winter of 1812, Napoleon's army retreated from Moscow under appalling conditions, hunted by three separate Russian armies, its chances of survival apparently nil. By late November Napoleon had reached the banks of the River Berezina - the last natural obstacle between his army and the safety of the Polish frontier. But instead of finding the river frozen solid enough to march his men across, an unseasonable thaw had turned the Berezina into an icy torrent. Having already ordered the burning of his bridging equipment, Napoleon's predicament was serious enough: but with the army of Admiral Chichagov holding the opposite bank, and those of Kutusov and Wittgenstein closing fast, it was critical. Only a miracle could save him ...

In a gripping narrative Alexander Mikaberidze describes how Napoleon rose from the pit of despair to the peak of his powers in order to achieve that miracle. Drawing on contemporary sources - letters, diaries, memoirs - he recreates one of the greatest escapes in military history - a story often half-told in general histories of the Russian campaign but never before fully explored.

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