

Napoleon's Empire Collapses

Essential Question: In your opinion, which of Napoleon's mistake was the most serious? Justify your answer.

- Napoleon's Three Costly Mistakes
- Napoleon's Downfall

Napoleon's Three Costly Mistakes

- Napoleon's own personality proved to be the **greatest danger to his empire and his love of power led to his doom.**
- In his effort to extent the French Empire and crush Britain he made **three costly mistakes.**

Napoleon's First Mistake

- Napoleon's 1st mistake was an unsuccessful attempt to cut off trade with a forcible closing of ports (blockade) in 1806 with Great Britain and other European countries.
 - ▣ He called this policy the **Continental System**, because it was suppose to make continental Europe more self sufficient.
 - ▣ Because Britain had the better navy it didn't work, and Britain blocked France instead.
 - ▣ As a result the **Continental System** hurt Napoleon more than his enemies, and weakened the economy of France.

Napoleon's Second Mistakes

- Napoleon's 2nd costly mistake occurred in 1808 when he sent an army through Spain to **invade Portugal** because it was ignoring the **Continental System**.
 - When Spanish towns rioted in protest, Napoleon got mad and **disposed the Spanish King** and put his brother **Joseph** on the throne.
 - This further outraged the Spanish and enflamed their nationalist feelings, feared the French would undermine the authority of the Catholic Church.
 - For 6 years the Spanish peasant fighters know as **guerillas** would strike at French troops by ambushing them then fleeing into hiding.
 - The **Peninsular War** in Spain inflames Spanish nationalism and weakens France.
 - Napoleon lost about **300,000 troops** during the Peninsular War, which **weakened the French Empire**.
- Elsewhere in Europe **nationalism (loyalty to one's own country)** was becoming a **powerful weapon against Napoleon**,

Napoleon's Third Mistakes

- In June of 1812 Napoleon's thirst for power led to his 3rd and most disastrous mistake of all when he marched into Russia.
 - ▣ Even though Russian Czar Alexander I had become Napoleon's ally, Napoleon decided to invade when the ruler refused to stop selling grain to Britain and thought he might have designs on Poland.
 - ▣ Alexander I ordered this army to retreat by using a **scorched-earth policy** of destroying everything and leaving nothing behind for the enemy.
 - ▣ Napoleon took Moscow but the Russians just kept retreating but didn't surrender.
 - ▣ With winter approaching Napoleon was forced to order his men to retreat, and a terrible loss of life occurred between Russian raiders, hunger and cold.
 - ▣ Of the over 400,000 men the French invaded Russia with in June, only 10,000 made it back from Russia alive in December

Napoleon's Downfall

- All of the remaining powers of Europe were quick to **unite against** a weakened **Napoleon**
- **Coalition army** defeats **Napoleon's** inexperienced forces in the **Battle of Leipzig** in **October of 1813**, and marching to Paris by **March of 1814**.
- **Napoleon** surrendered his throne and accepted terms of surrender drawn up by **Alexander I**, which included a his **banishment to Elba**, a tiny island off the Italian coast.
- **Louis XVIII**, **brother of the guillotined king**, was appointed to rule **France**, but he quickly **became unpopular among the peasants** who suspected him of wanting to undo the revolution's land reforms.

Napoleon's Downfall

- This was all the incentive Napoleon needed and he escapes and briefly regains power (**Hundred Days**) when thousands welcome him back and volunteer to join the army.
- European allies quickly gathered their armies and Napoleon is defeated by British and Prussian troops at **Waterloo**.
- British take no chances and Napoleon is exiled to **St. Helena**, a remote island in the South Atlantic, where he dies of a stomach ailment 6 years later.

Napoleon's Legacy

- Napoleon was a military genius and brilliant administrator, but all of his victories must be measured against the millions of lives that were lost in his wars.
- Of all his achievements, only his law codes and some government reforms proved lasting.