Fragment of "Battle of Moscow (as the French referred to it)

7th September 1812", 1822 by Louis Lejeune

The Battle of Borodino, fought on September 7, 1812, was the largest and bloodiest single-day action of the French invasion of Russia, involving more than 250,000 troops and resulting in at least 70,000 casualties. The French Grande Armée under Emperor Napoleon I attacked the Imperial Russian Army of General Mikhail Kutuzov near the village of Borodino, west of the town of Mozhaysk, and eventually captured the main positions on the battlefield, but failed to destroy the Russian army. About a third of Napoleon's soldiers were killed or wounded; Russian losses, while heavier, could be replaced due to Russia's large population, since Napoleon's campaign took place on Russian soil.

The battle itself ended with the disorganized Russian Army out of position and ripe for complete defeat. The state of the French forces and the lack of recognition of the state of the Russian Army led Napoleon to remain on the battlefield with his army instead of the forced pursuit that had marked other campaigns that he had conducted in the past. The battle at Borodino was a pivotal point in the campaign, as it was the last offensive action fought by Napoleon in Russia.

Borodino is 120 kilometers (74 miles) southwest of Moscow. A polished granite obelisk (1966) crowned by a bronze eagle is dedicated to Russian Field Marshal Kutuzov. Leo Tolstoy visited the battlefield in 1876 while writing War and Peace. Every year the anniversary of the 1812 battle is celebrated by a Borodino Field Day, when the battle is actually reenacted. People playing the French and Russian soldiers dress in period uniforms, cannons roar and smoke rises from the battlefield. A religious ceremony is held after the battle to give thanks for Napoleon’s defeat. Filmmaker Sergei Bondarchuk’s four-part, nine-hour epic "War and Peace" was Russia’s longest and most expensive film ever made. Taking five years to produce, it encompassed some of the most spectacular battle scenes ever seen on the big screen.