Napoleon’s Fall – 1814

Napoleon’s empire began to crumble for several reasons. First, most people in conquered states looked on Napoleon’s armies as foreign oppressors. Inspired by **nationalism**, people across Europe revolted against French rule.

 Another factor was Napoleon’s invasion of Russia in 1812. As Napoleon’s armies invaded from the west, the Russians retreated eastward. The “scorched earth” policy of the Russians, in which they burned crops and villages as they retreated, left the French troops hungry and cold. Most of Napoleon’s army was lost during the long Russian winter.

 The following year, an alliance of Russia, Britain, Austria, and Prussia defeated Napoleon, forcing him to step down in 1814. Napoleon returned to power in 1815, but the British and Prussians defeated him at the decisive Battle of Waterloo. This battle ended Napoleon’s reign, and he lived the rest of his life in exile.

The Congress of Vienna - 1815
Following the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte, the major European powers met in Vienna, Austria to establish a plan of peace and discuss the position of borders.  The European powers present at the Congress of Vienna included Austria, France, Prussia, Russia, and England.  Headed by Austria's Prince Metternich, the Congress of Vienna attempted to stem the tide of nationalism sweeping across Europe.  Metternich believed nationalism created disorder because it fostered violent revolution.  The Congress of Vienna sought to restore absolutist ruling families to the thrones of Europe and maintain a **balance of power**.  A balance of power means that one nation should not be allowed to dominate and threaten other nations.  The Congress of Vienna was successful in suppressing nationalistic movements from 1815 to 1848, a period also known as the Metternich Age, however, nationalism would eventually return to the Europe.  Nationalistic movements in Italy and Germany would result in unified, sovereign nation-states.

Guided Questions

1. **Inference:** How could nationalism, or love for one’s own country, inspire Europeans to challenge Napoleon?

2. **Main Idea:** What two factors contributed to Napoleon’s fall?

3. **Cause & Effect:** What were the two aims of the Congress of Vienna?