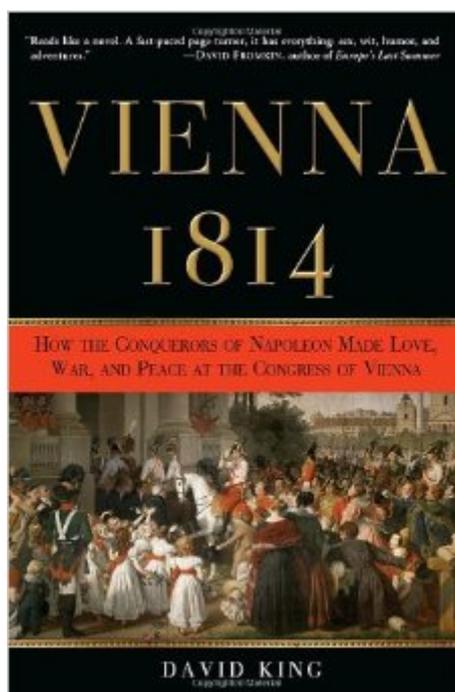


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Vienna, 1814: How The Conquerors Of Napoleon Made Love, War, And Peace At The Congress Of Vienna



Synopsis

â œReads like a novel. A fast-paced page-turner, it has everything: sex, wit, humor, and adventures. But it is an impressively researched and important story.â •â ”David Fromkin, author of Europeâ™s Last Summer

Vienna, 1814 is an evocative and brilliantly researched account of the most audacious and extravagant peace conference in modern European history. With the feared Napoleon Bonaparte presumably defeated and exiled to the small island of Elba, heads of some 216 states gathered in Vienna to begin piecing together the ruins of his toppled empire. Major questions loomed: What would be done with France? How were the newly liberated territories to be divided? What type of restitution would be offered to families of the deceased? But this unprecedented gathering of kings, dignitaries, and diplomatic leaders unfurled a seemingly endless stream of personal vendettas, long-simmering feuds, and romantic entanglements that threatened to undermine the crucial work at hand, even as their hard-fought policy decisions shaped the destiny of Europe and led to the longest sustained peace the continent would ever see. Beyond the diplomatic wrangling, however, the Congress of Vienna served as a backdrop for the most spectacular Vanity Fair of its time. Highlighted by such celebrated figures as the elegant but incredibly vain Prince Metternich of Austria, the unflappable and devious Prince Talleyrand of France, and the volatile Tsar Alexander of Russia, as well as appearances by Ludwig van Beethoven and Emilia Bigottini, the sheer star power of the Vienna congress outshone nearly everything else in the public eye. An early incarnation of the cult of celebrity, the congress devolved into a series of debauched parties that continually delayed the progress of peace, until word arrived that Napoleon had escaped, abruptly halting the revelry and shrouding the continent in panic once again. Vienna, 1814 beautifully illuminates the intricate social and political intrigue of this history-defining congressâ “a glorified party that seemingly valued frivolity over substance but nonetheless managed to drastically reconfigure Europeâ™s balance of power and usher in the modern age. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Author David King has written a new book about a subject often dismissed as little more than the antecedent to Napoleon's 100 days campaign. Most books written on this topic were written years ago and with a predictable bent. Mr. King's book is both an objective and easily readable book on this subject. He writes in modern English and intersperses interesting historical anecdotes with the nuts-and-bolts diplomatic maneuvers of the nations through their diplomatic representatives. On the 200th anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar, it was disappointing to find a number of the books written on that subject merely used material readily available from secondary sources. So, with regard to historical accuracy, I was impressed with Mr. King's diligence shown through the use of original source materials. Mr. King travelled throughout Europe, and actually spoke with the librarians and archivists in the nations which participated in the Congress. His list of notes and sources is nearly 100 pages in length. This produces a picture of the Congress which is developed not just from the official records and notes of the participants, but from the equally important inhabitants of the salons and the shadows. Mr. King makes copious use of the surreptitious communication between the Duchess Sagan and Prince Metternich (discovered in 1949) and the notes of one of Metternich's assistants. Most notable however, are previously unpublished accounts of the police spy network set up by the Austrian Emperor Francis. All of this information could make a narrative of the Congress over-laden with minutiae and prone to drone on and on with endless details of interest only to those wishing to serve in the diplomatic corps. Here, Mr.

Based on the reviews, "Vienna 1814" has raised some unexpected passions, given that it's an account of events almost two centuries past. David King has produced a solid and well written book that enlivens the story of the Congress of Vienna - and of Napoleon's hundred days - for the modern reader. The title, homage to Margaret MacMillan's Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World, about the Peace conference that followed the First World War, is somewhat misleading. The Congress of Vienna never officially opened; rather, the world's leading statesmen of the time -

Austria's Prince Metternich, France's Charles Talleyrand, Russia's Czar Alexander and Britain's Lord Castlereigh and the Duke of Wellington, and many others - have spent the summer and autumn of 1814, and the winter and spring of 1815 in Vienna. There they have quarreled, argued and negotiated - but also danced, drank and fornicated - and shaped the future of Europe. David King tells with equal ease both the social and the political tales of Vienna in those months. He narrates his heroes in the stateroom and in the ballroom, in love and war, in work and play. This is both an advantage and a weakness of the narrative. On the one hand, King captures the spirit of the Congress - the balls and masquerades, the splendor, the gossip - and allows the reader to feel some of what the protagonists must have felt. On the other hand, the love lives of the Rich and Famous of the 19th century are not nearly as exciting to the modern reader as they were to the contemporary observer. Did the Duchess Sagan end up in the arms of her longing prince Metternich?

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