



The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918

A.J.P. Taylor

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The fall of Metternich in the revolutions which swept Europe in 1848 heralded an era of unprecedented nationalism, which culminated in the collapse of the Habsburg, Romanov, and Hohenzollern dynasties at the of the First World War. In the intervening seventy years which are the subject of this book, the boundaries of Europe changed dramatically from those established at Vienna in 1815: Cavour championed the cause of *Risorgimento* in Italy; Bismarck brought about the unification of Germany; while the Great Powers scrambled for a place in the sun in Africa.

In this, one of his most enduring works, A.J.P. Taylor shows how the changing balance of power determined the course of European history, during this, the last age when Europe was the centre of world history. Throughout, Taylor's narrative is so vivid that the book is as much a work of literature as a contribution to historical scholarship.

The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918 Details

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Mohamed Farag says

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Robert says

Definitive - but also intensely dry and academic.

Dave says

It's hard to imagine a better one-stop-shop for all you might want to know about this period. While I like to use this as a reference for particular things, I found I could not read it cover to cover. It is so jam packed that I felt it lost any sense of narrative.

Scriptor Ignotus says

A dense but fascinating account of the intricacies of European diplomacy from the 1848 revolutions, which unhinged the system established at Vienna by Metternich, to the end of the Great War, in which, as Taylor argued, Europe ceased to be entirely the master of its own affairs, becoming a battleground between liberalism and communism. If you're looking for a good international political history of this era, it is hard to go wrong with Taylor. All of the great developments of the era are covered at length, as are the prime movers and shakers: the adventurism of Napoleon III, the Crimean War, the unification of Italy and Germany, the decay of the Austrian and Ottoman Empires, Bismarck's impossibly complex system of alliances, and the gradual awakening of a tide of nationalism and mass politics that swept policymakers along in its wake. The book closes with a long and impressive account of the communications between the great powers behind the scenes of the carnage of the Great War. As other reviewers have said, nobody could do diplomatic history as well as A.J.P. Taylor. It is considered a classic with good reason.

Nat Kidder says

Crisp, chronological narrative of European diplomacy and warfare between fall of Metternich and the end of World War I. Engagingly written, and much more than a list of dates and events, with insightful analysis sprinkled throughout. (My favorite: one and only one battle during this timeframe changed the course of history; what was it?)

Students looking for profound causes and effects might be disappointed; those who want wide knowledge of

the balance of power age will find it a valuable resource and an entertaining read.

Mohammed says

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MissSophie says

I powered through this for my course over the last days (skipping the sections that I already read about in another book) and I have to say, I am happy to have finished this monstrosity full of details I will not remember anyways. This is the one book I am ditching as soon as the course is over! The other book I read about this topic wasn't nearly as detailed but still gave me a good overview about what happened at that time. So this review is not so much about the content (because it is an interesting topic and period in European history and it gets the +1 star for that), but about how the content was presented. And since I only need it for two weeks, I could have skipped that one without feeling bad.

????????? ?????? says

Monumental account of the diplomacy between the great powers of Europe in this period. Taylor shows a great knowledge and the book is fluid despite of the abuse of semicolons throughout

Greg D'Avis says

First read this in college -- now giving it another go. I can already tell it's going to be amazing.

4triplezed says

I can hardly complain. A battered copy for few cents in a 2nd hand book shop but it was a haul. Diplomatic history written for those studying diplomacy? I have read plenty of dry and dense history and some I thought was very good indeed but this just seemed to be page after page of dense stream of consciousness prose. I learnt a bit hence 2 stars but I have one more by the author and may give it a while before I get into it.

Lauren Albert says

I just couldn't do it. I clearly tried reading both this and his history of England more than once since I found bookmarks in them. I read collections of his essays without a problem. So why can't I make it through these?

Partly because he makes statements about situations without explanation. In general, I just couldn't follow. I like to consider myself less ignorant about history than many Americans (if more ignorant than many non-Americans). But maybe I'm wrong.

Kevin says

A panoramic view of European history from the revolutions of 1848 to the end of the First World Power, when Europe "ceased to be the centre of the world". Though Taylor can be extremely dense, (if I had a nickel for every semi-colon...), he delves into every era with a tenacious insight that leaves you simultaneously gasping for air upon finishing and filled with a profound knowledge of the aims and motives of the great powers and their leaders alike.

I especially liked his treatment of the Crimean war and its consequences.

Zach says

An extremely thorough look at international diplomacy during the height of the European balance of power. The author has a dry style that was very amusing to me. But beware that this is a history of international relations only - anything else is only mentioned in passing, if at all.

Tyler Ostergaard says

Great read but ONLY if you enjoy complex diplomatic history. Still a breathtaking work of scholarship.

Nathan says

A history of diplomatic manoeuvring between the European great powers before World War 1. Rather dry, with little editorial comment. Still, good to learn things from if you're into such things. 3/5

Df doom says

Political/military/diplomatic history is no longer my thing, but if you do like that sort of thing few people did it better than A. J. P. Taylor.

Cat says

What possessed me to purchase this book? There I was, in Bonanza Books, my favorite book store in my parent's home town. I looked at the title and thought, "Maybe I am interested in the struggle for mastery in Europe (1848-1918).

I'm not at all a fan of european diplomatic history. Though the material has a certain "Wes Anderson" (filmmaker of Rushmore and Royal Tennenbaum) flavor to it. Lots of triple ententes, diplomatic notes and, my favorite phrase in the whole book- "secret diplomacy". You see, through out the time period of this book, few of the European Powers resembled the modern democracy of free press and public opinion. In fact- of the major powers (UK, France, Prussia/Germany, Austria Hungary, Russia and sometimes Italy and Turkey), only England was arguably a "democracy" for the entire period.

So basically, European Diplomacy during this period resembled a version of Risk- all the players plotting with first one partner, then the other, with the idea of maintaining a balance, rather then provoking a final reckoning. Taylor- an english historian who is widely acclaimed for being one of the first "tv" personalities from the history profession (though not on you tube), was also one of the very first "revisionist" historians. "Mastery" was originally published in 1954. Taylor is revisionist in an American sense because he doesn't adopt a principled/moral perspective on the events of history. Although Taylor is "anti-German" in a broad sense, it's a more sophisticated perspective on world affairs then most americans are used to reading at the college level (though I'd imagine post graduate students of european history are required to read taylor).

In my reading, the nuances of each event (Colorful sub chapters like "The Andrassy Note" or "The League of the Three Emperors" abound) are subsumed by the broad flow of Taylor's broader "anti-great men" of history approach. Taylor takes the position that most dealing in international affairs are dealing with a lack of solid information about their opponents and partners. I can think of at least twenty occasions where Taylor was "But Minister X was wrong about his assumption."

That there largely was no war amongst the so-called Great Powers between the Crimean war of the 1850s and World War I of 1914 is largely ascribed by Taylor to the brilliance of Bismarck. Bismarck's genius is that he subscribed to a world view where Germany DID NOT dominate all of Europe. After he leave the scene, the German/Prussian leadership is gradually won over to the "German mastery over Europe." "German Nationalism" serves as an eerie prologue to events that this book does not cover, but the time period in Mastery is just as close to Napoleon's French Empire- an era also not covered in this book.

Andy says

One of the great history writers of all time writes the greatest history of all time. This book is lengthy, but Taylor is never overly pedantic. Highly recommended
