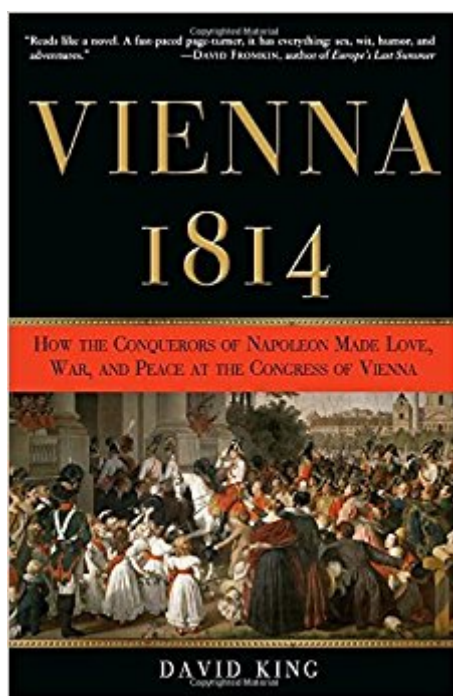


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# Vienna, 1814: How The Conquerors Of Napoleon Made Love, War, And Peace At The Congress Of Vienna



## Synopsis

“Reads 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.” —David Fromkin, author of *Europe’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 congress—a glorified party that seemingly valued frivolity over substance but nonetheless managed to drastically reconfigure Europe’s balance of power and usher in the modern age. From the Hardcover edition.

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## Customer Reviews

Leaders from the world's five major diplomatic forces—Great Britain, France, Austria, Prussia and Russia—convened in Vienna in 1814 to found a new order for post-Napoleonic Europe. Historian King (Finding Atlantis) calls it the greatest and most lavish party in history, at which delegates would plot, scheme, jockey for position, and, in short, infuriate each other as they competed in affairs of state and the heart. King covers the diplomatic wrangling well, particularly over the fates of Poland, Saxony and the Kingdom of Naples. His greater strength is in depicting the personalities and motivations of the key players, such as Metternich's daring love affair with a baroness and Czar Alexander I's growing reliance on a German mystic. Despite endless parties, the Congress achieved pioneering work in culture and human rights, including Jewish rights and a vote to abolish slavery. Most important, it established alliances that defeated Napoleon's attempt to regain power in 1815 and helped foster a spirit of cooperation that, in some ways, has still not been surpassed. King's fine work is not quite as scholarly as the book it recalls, Margaret Macmillan's Paris 1919, but it is more deftly paced and engagingly written. 16 pages of b&w photos. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"King reveals his talent for narrative flow and portraiture in a biography that will thoroughly inveigle history readers. Booklist "A teeming personality-rich panorama of the first truly international peace conference. Kirkus Reviews "A fascinating tale that shines light on a unique aspect of the relationship between scholarship and nationalism. Choice "It would have been more fun to attend the Congress of Vienna than any other political assembly in history. Next best is to immerse yourself in David King's Vienna 1814, which reads 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 that it tells. There was much frivolousness in the Vienna congress, but it did bring peace to Europe and

shape the 19th century; and while the deliberations of the Vienna statesmen took place, the fate of the world hung in the balance." —David Fromkin, author of *Europe's Last Summer* —"Deftly paced and engagingly written." —Publishers Weekly —"King does a superb job of evoking the bedazzling social scene that served as the backdrop to the Congress of Vienna. This is a worthy contribution to the study of a critical historical event long neglected by historians. It should be in every European history collection." —Library Journal, starred review

From the Hardcover edition.

I knew nothing about this history, unlike many from Vienna and Europeans who know their history. I guess it is a situation where you can't know everything! That aside, this book is fascinating. It is a combination of a personal historical drama, war, high-stakes international relations, and culture. One might initially think that David King delves a bit too much into the sexual affairs of the senior participants, but soon one sees that this is part of the whole Congress and wheeling and dealing. In the old monarchic Europe, policy and family were intertwined in a way that we don't imagine possible today. My main complaint is that David King is a bit negative about Napoleon in a way that I found unprofessional. Name-calling Napoleon such as tyrant and conqueror projects a one-sided view of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. Credit to King for suggesting that Napoleon tried to protect Jews and end slavery (the second time around). But there was no discussion of how all of the Napoleonic wars started, and the root causes of the French Revolution. This wasn't the place for it... but for that reason the one-sided name-calling should have been avoided. There are many ironies to note that the book highlights. First, that the slow pace of the Congress actually resulted in the "Allies" being able to defeat the returned Napoleon, as they were all in the same place at the same time. Second, that with Napoleon and France defeated, each side began to worry about one another's power - with Prussia and Russia becoming the greatest fear in an either/or assessment. When, in fact, as we know, they both became dominant powers in Europe to catastrophic result. Really a great read altogether. Liam H Dooley [www.liamhdooley.com](http://www.liamhdooley.com)

OK, I know I liked the book when I'm upset I finished it. This book was a fantastic way to learn about post-Napoleon Europe ... reads like a novel, enjoyable cover to cover. Similar to all the books written about the years immediately following WWI and WWII, this one goes back to the previous century's war that defined all of Europe. The personalities are overwhelmingly entertaining, especially Metternich and Talleyrand. These two are just the tip of the iceberg, though, with an abundance of real characters, including royalty, diplomats, and soldiers. Admittedly, there is some

guilty pleasure as some sections may belong on the gossip page, but I found this makes for a fun way to break up the more serious content. There are many fascinating individuals I "met" for the first time. It's the best book I've read for the royal personalities just before the Industrial Revolution. In short, highly recommended!

This is an account of the social (and sexual) side of the Congress of Vienna, which is certainly better reading than a history of the diplomatic negotiations. The organization of Europe after the fall of Napoleon was determined more by the quirks, egos, and libidos of the monarchs than by any rational considerations of equity, workability, or even common decency. Metternich and Talleyrand come over as lovable rascals, and the withdrawal of Czar Alexander I into mystical cultism is outlined in some detail. Exactly why the Congress of Vienna resulted in right-wing repression in some countries while permitting others to progress through reform is perhaps too large a subject for a book of this length. You would need more than one book to understand the Congress of Vienna, but this one should be included.

This was the first and only account of the Vienna Congress I have ever read that concentrated on the social and personal aspects of this momentous event. The book's only deficiency, as I saw it, was the rather truncated exposition or explanation of the major geopolitical issues that arose, such as the resolution of the fates of Saxony and Poland. Little is said at how the great diplomats actually worked through and compromised these issues (among others). Nonetheless, the description of the atmospherics, the impact of the Congress on the people and city of Vienna, the personalities of the major players, their love lives and scandals, gave a rich texture to the narrative you will not find in other more scholarly books. I would recommend it to any history lover.

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