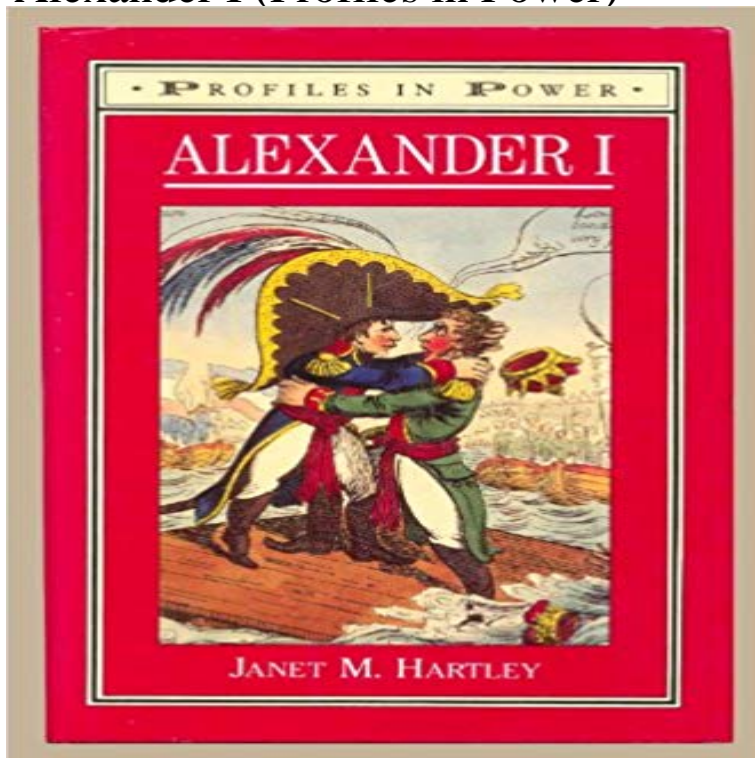


Alexander I (Profiles in Power)



This is part of a series which provides studies of key, political figures in world history since 1500. The books are not biographies as such; rather they are designed to be succinct interpretative essays analyzing the major features of the career within the context of its own time. This book covers the career of Tsar Alexander I of Russia (1801-1825) in the context of his times. Alexander (the Tsar of War and Peace) spent much of his reign locked in a titanic struggle with Napoleon which led to the 1812 invasion of Russia. After Napoleons defeat, Alexander promoted a new vision for Europe, ultimately embodied in the Holy Alliance (between Russia, Austria and Prussia). He was thus a dominant figure on the European stage as well as in the immediately Russian sphere. But he was a strangely contradictory character - he claimed to hate power but was a party to the coup that ended in the murder of his father, Paul I; he claimed to love constitutions, yet failed to implement the constitutional programmes written in his reign for Russia; he hated serfdom, but did little to ameliorate the lot of serfs; he wanted to be a reformer but died a reactionary. Janet Hartley reviews his aims and actions, and finds him a more consistent figure than circumstances, and posterity, have allowed. The book sets Alexander in his full Russian and European context, and shows how circumstances restricted his freedom of action both at home and abroad. It establishes the main principles and considerations which governed his domestic and foreign policies, and shows them to have remained consistent throughout the reign and it argues that the ultimate significance of the reign lies in the alienation which began in Alexanders time between the educated elite and the imperial regime, which was to undermine all attempts to reform Russia right through to the Revolution.

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