



1815: The Roads to Waterloo

Gregor Dallas

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The seventeen months from April 1814 to August 1815 were an extraordinary period in European history; a period which saw two sieges of Paris, a complete revision of Europe's political frontiers, an international Congress set up in Vienna, civil war in Italy and international war in Belgium. Gregor Dallas tells the story of these days through the perspectives of three very different European cities: the great metropolis of London, post-revolutionary Paris and baroque Vienna. The writing is almost cinematic in its power to evoke and bring to life the Europe of Tolstoy: the ebb and flow of power, of armies and of peoples across Europe's northern plains. Working essentially from primary sources, Dallas is as interested in the weather conditions before battle as in the way cartoonists reacted to court intrigues and fashions. It is also Europe seen through the eyes of its central players: Talleyrand, who has served nearly every French regime since the Revolution of 1789; Metternich, who devises new plans for a 'Germany' that does not yet exist and for a 'Europe' that remains divided; Wellington, who reveals himself a diplomat as well as a soldier; Tsar Alexander, an idealist seeking to impose a uniform plan for all Europe; and 'Boney' himself, who has his own ideal of Europe and, though banished to Elba, does not abandon his dream to realise it.

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