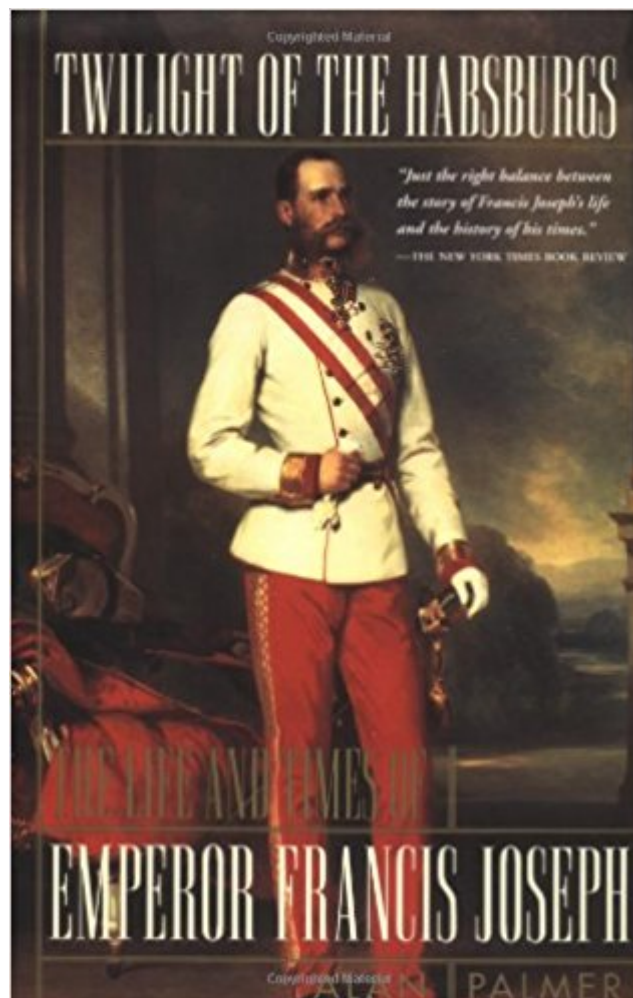




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Twilight Of The Habsburgs: The Life And Times Of Emperor Francis Joseph



Synopsis

No ruler in modern times reigned in full sovereignty for as long as Francis Joseph, emperor of Austria and king of Hungary, Bohemia, Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia. Titular master of central Europe from 1848 until 1916, he was center stage in Europe throughout the dramatic era in which Italy and Germany emerged as united nation states. His personal decisions were vital both to the outcome of the Crimean War and to the onset of World War I, sixty years later. Far more than a biography of a great ruler, *Twilight of the Habsburgs* is a social, cultural, political, and military history of Europe from the end of the Napoleonic era to the assassination at Sarajevo. "Just the right balance between the story of Francis Joseph's life and the history of his times." -- The New York Times Book Review; "Excellent and absorbing . . . A compelling read." -- Evening Standard (London).

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Customer Reviews

Palmer (Crowned Cousins) notes in his introduction that there is more to Franz Josef (1830-1916) than his longevity. But considering how many of the emperor's immediate circle died young and/or violently, longevity in this set was a real virtue: Franz Josef's son Rudolf killed himself and his mistress at Mayerling in 1889; his wife, the Empress Elisabeth, was assassinated by an Italian anarchist in 1898; and, most famously, his nephew Franz Ferdinand and his wife were shot to death in 1914 by the Bosnian Serb Gavrilo Princip. The portrait that emerges from Palmer's descriptions is that of a sad figure left much alone by his unstable wife and of a man very concerned for his

empire's survival and for personal honor (his best feature) but, like other wildly inbred Hapsburgs, probably not a very bright bulb. Palmer gives little sense of the culture of fin de siècle Vienna, focusing more on the machinations of states (the League of Three Emperors, the Triple Alliance, etc.) that led to WWI and foreshadowed WWII and the current Balkan crisis. These dry if informative passages sit uncomfortably with the gushy personal details ("he was fascinated by her sister's untarnished elfin qualities, by the long auburn hair and the challenge of those dancing eyes...").

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No ruler in modern times reigned in full sovereignty for as long as Francis Joseph emperor of Austria and king of Hungary, Bohemia, Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia. Titular master of central Europe from 1848 until 1916, he was center stage in Europe throughout the dramatic era in which Italy and Germany emerged as united nation states. His personal decisions were vital both to the outcome of the Crimean War and to the onset of World War I, sixty years later. Although he was an autocrat who believed in the Habsburg dynastic mission to provide eleven distinct nationalities with a cohesive unity, he was also a family man of simple tastes; and in his old age he was revered in his Austrian heartland, much as Queen Victoria was within her empire. Francis Joseph suffered a succession of personal disasters: his brother, Maximilian, was executed by Mexican republicans; his only son, Rudolf, shot himself and his mistress at Mayerling; his empress-queen Elizabeth, died from stab wounds in Geneva; his nephew and heir, Francis Ferdinand, was assassinated at Sarajevo. These episodes are examined anew by Alan Palmer in a biography of revelation, reassessment, and restoration. Too often the emperor is represented as a lonely, humorless bureaucrat, lacking in human warmth, artistic sensitivity, or political perception. Alan Palmer believes that this is a false impression. From a reading of hundreds of the emperor's letters, as well as his mother's diaries and other papers in the Vienna archives, Alan Palmer presents a more rounded and sympathetic portrait of Francis Joseph as the head of an empire and the head of a family. He has also used Elizabeth's curious verse journal, only recently made public, and the extensive writings of the controversial Crown Prince Rudolf in a reappraisal of the conflicting emotions that troubled the oldest of dynasties at a time of immense social, cultural, and political change for European society. Finally, Alan Palmer examines the durability of the Francis Joseph legend and its manifestation in republican Austria today.

An excellent description of the times of Francis Joseph, one of the longest reigning monarchs of

Europe, his personal tragedies, and his view on how to keep his large Empire functioning.

great book

Great book.

good book--history at its best!!!!

Excellent

Great

Similar to previous reviews I have read, it is very distracting to see names Anglicanized by the author. It is FRANZ Joseph, not Francis. Otherwise a great pre-World War I history of Central Europe.

a CLEAR SUMMARY OF THE MAIN EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF A MAN STRUGGLING TO HOLD HIS EMPIRE TOGETHER WHILE HAVING TO COPE WITH PERSONAL TRAGEDY.

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