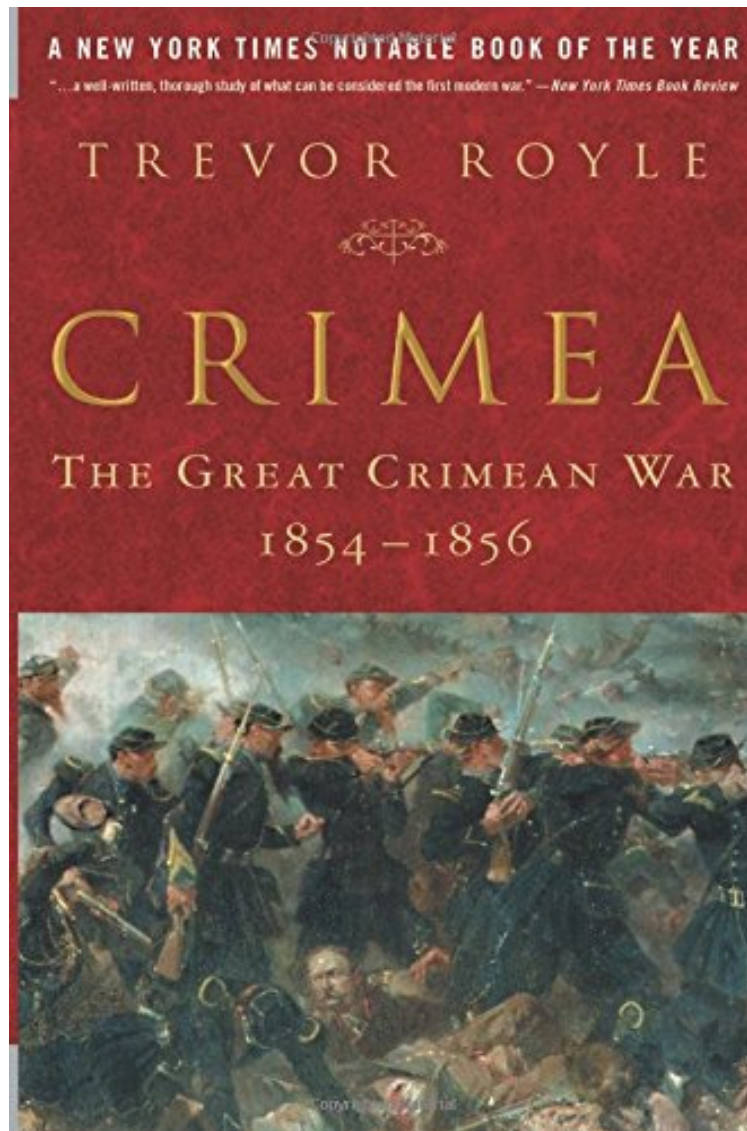


Crimea: The Great Crimean War, 1854-1856

Trevor Royle

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Trevor Royle : Crimea: The Great Crimean War, 1854-1856 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Crimea: The Great Crimean War, 1854-1856:

23 of 23 people found the following review helpful. Detailed, thoughtful look at a critical point in historyBy CustomerIn "Crimea: The Great Crimean War 1854 - 1856" Trevor Royle has produced a work that is impressive not only for its reporting of the facts surrounding a very muddled war, but also for successfully placing The Crimean War within a greater context of European history. While perhaps slightly too focused on the British point of view, Royle is

nonetheless supremely evenhanded, and does a superb job of capturing the numerous diplomatic subtleties which surrounded the events in the Crimea. Like all successful military histories, Royle's begins well before the years that actually encompass the fighting. Instead he examines France's (embodied in Napoleon III), desire to climb out of the hole it was left in after Waterloo. Having been stripped of all influence in Europe, and having lost much of its colonial Empire, France had nonetheless learned valuable lessons in Algeria during the intervening decades. Moreover, what France lacked in industrialization when compared to Britain, it more than made up for with unabashed ambition. At the same time, Britain was at the peak of a Pax Britannica that would last until 1914. As such, it was primarily concerned with maintaining the status quo, and protecting the crown jewel of the empire: India. Thus it came to pass that when Russia used protestations of religious crimes (which were complete pretexts, in spite of their veracity) as a *causis belli* for war with Turkey, that Britain and France, longstanding adversaries and frequent enemies, were thrust together to preserve an Ottoman Empire that was too caught up in inertia to save itself. Britain to protect India's fragile northwest frontier, and France to regain some of the luster it had lost. The result, of course, was The Crimean War, a bizarre set of misadventures that seemingly accomplished nothing, and yet set the stage for a host of events to come. Specifically, battlefield necessity saw the invention or adaptation of numerous devices, such as the telegraph, railroad, field hospitals, rifles (as opposed to muskets), sanitation, steam-powered warships etc., many of which are credited to the more famous American Civil War. As such, the Crimean war can rightfully be argued as the first modern war, and it is therefore well worth studying. For example, the difficulties that the fractious British-French-Turkish alliance faced are particularly telling in a world where strategies for global collective action are sorely lacking. As for the fighting itself, there were precious few of what one might consider battles, the Alma, Inkerman/Balaklava and the siege of Sevastopol being the notable exceptions. For the most part this was a war that presaged World War I, with protracted trench fighting in brutal conditions. Nonetheless, Royle does a good job of setting the stage for the various engagements, including geography, units, commanders and missed opportunities. In particular, he does a superb job of portraying the senior commanders on all sides in an objective manner. However, it is in this area that I must make one of my two complaints: there is a serious lack of both quantity and quality when it comes to the maps. Far too often, I was left referring to other sources in order to follow the battles; most absurdly, there is no map of the Black Sea/Crimean Peninsula until page 375! Moreover, rather than using detailed topographical maps, Royle elected to use the quaint, vaguely hand drawn maps that anyone who studies military history is familiar with (and abhors). What they possess in graphic appeal, they more than lose in lack of useful terrain and coordinate information. That said, it is the political intrigue that dominates this book and where Royle is truly in his element. He deftly captures the various power plays that come to influence the outcome of events, and at the same time provides an even handed running commentary on the skills/deficits of the various players. Which leads me to my second complaint: the problem is that Royle offers a wealth of information about British decision making, but the step down to France, Russia, Turkey and other associated players is severe. To be fair, this may be a function of the autocratic leadership in these latter countries, which served to compress the decision making cycle and limit correspondence that would shed light on events. Nonetheless, I felt that Turkey in particular could have been better rounded out. Finally, Royle quite succinctly places The Crimean War within the context of European conflict up through World War I. Just as in its tactics the Crimea foreshadowed the events of 1914-1918, so to did the grand strategy of 1854 rear its head sixty years later. By recognizing this fact, Royle has elevated what might have become a dusty recounting of a largely forgotten war into a superb examination of European (and by extension, world) politics in the ninety-eight years between Waterloo and Franz Ferdinand's assassination. As such, it works successfully as both military history and political science, and is well worth reading by students of both.

Jake Mohlman 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Back to The Crimea

By Daniel Myers

Trevor Royle does a bang-up job in this book of covering the Crimean War in all its aspects - diplomatic, military, technological, cultural - in as thorough a manner for any armchair historian to be left quite satisfied with the information, but, perhaps, a touch deflated in the end. True, it's unmistakably an Anglo-centric book, but, really, I don't think the war has much interest to historians of other countries, such as France. For the French, anyway, the Franco-Prussian War - in which Paris itself fell in January, 1871 - takes precedence in the nation's narrative, and the tricolour now flying over Alsace-Lorraine is still a source of national pride after that war's blow to French amour-propre and territorial integrity. As for Turkey and Russia, the war has been, respectively, eclipsed by the end of the Ottoman Empire and the demise of Tsarist rule. It is only in the UK that schoolboys - I speak from experience - are still forced to memorise such things as Lord Tennyson's "The Charge of The Light Brigade" which Royle rightly takes to task not only for getting it all wrong regarding the soldiers' mindset, but also for simply being a bad poem. The war, in general, is also portrayed in the UK as some sort of moral victory for the Brits, when, in point of fact, as Royle makes exhaustively clear, rather the opposite was the case. So, to summarise, the account is an extremely well-informed and very readable account of the conflict. But I don't find myself as sanguine as does Royle in the final chapter entitled "Epilogue: 1914" in the final sentence of the book in which he declares, "...war between the great nations of Europe might just have become the stuff of history books." Perhaps, in context, this notion is correct in that there simply are not, at present, any "great" nations of Europe such as there were in the 19th Century. But, to the contrary, statements such as this one - nearly verbatim - were being made on the brink of the advent of WWI. Indeed,

Royle cites them in this concluding chapter. The overall impression one takes away from the book is that wars, such as the one in the Crimea, are always unexpectedly arising, bringing with them all the carnage, mismanagement, disease, petty rivalries among allies etc. that form their inherent accompaniment. Perhaps Royle needs to reread his own very engaging book. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Very good! If your primary interest is the war from the British standpoint. By JB1976I believe my introduction says all that needs saying. I VERY much enjoyed reading it, but it skimps quite a bit on the views and actions of France, Turkey and Russia. Oh, Austria's actions are barely mentioned. I'd recommend Fige's book.

The Crimean War, one of history's most compelling subjects, encompassed human suffering, woeful leadership and misadministration on a grand scale. It created a heroic myth out of the disastrous Charge of the Light Brigade and, in Florence Nightingale, it produced one of history's great heroes. The war was a watershed in world history and pointed the way to what mass warfare would be like in the twentieth century. New weapons were introduced; trench combat became a fact of daily warfare outside Sebastopol; medical innovation saved countless soldiers' lives that would otherwise have been lost. Ultimately, by failing to solve the Eastern Question, the war paved the way for the greater conflagration which broke out in 1914 and greatly prefigured the current situation in Eastern Europe.

.com The mid-19th-century Crimean War, pitting England, France, and less powerful allies against Russia, was one of the first major international wars in history. In the execution, it was none too inspiring. As Trevor Royle writes in his sweeping study of the conflict, "it encompassed maladministration on a grand scale and human suffering, if not without parallel then at least minutely recorded by the watching war correspondents"--the war being the first as well to have been widely reported. It was, a contemporary British journal put it, a war of "lions led by donkeys," young men commanded by doddering veterans of the Napoleonic campaigns who served in an unlikely alliance. The English officers, Royle writes, could never shake the habit of calling their French comrades "the enemy," and never quite trusted them, either. The result was carnage: not only the loss of a good portion of the Light Brigade in the most famous--but not the most inept--incident of the war, but also the destruction of whole regiments left to blunder about in the fog and smoke, thanks to their commanders' inadequate intelligence-gathering efforts. Not much changed at war's end. In the eventual peace treaty, France and England and Russia kept their territories more or less intact, and the struggle for power between Russia and the neighboring Ottoman Empire, in whose defense France and England had ostensibly gone to war, stretched out for another generation. It ended with a Russian victory that allowed Russia to assume control of Turkish holdings in the Balkans, which, Royle notes, lay the seeds for still another international conflict, World War I. Royle does a fine job of negotiating through the many complexities, diplomatic and military, of the Crimean War. His descriptions of battlefield tactics (or the lack thereof) are among the best in the literature. More comprehensive than Robert B. Edgerton's *Death or Glory: The Legacy of the Crimean War*, Royle's *Crimea* is likely to stand as an enduring work on this strange, wasteful conflict. --Gregory McNamee From *Publishers Weekly* In the century between Napoleon and WWI, only one major international war was fought among the European powers. Faintly understood, the Crimean War--which pitted Britain and France with the Ottoman Empire against Russia--was the war that made Florence Nightingale famous. But although it was arguably the hinge upon which much subsequent history turned, little is known about it, or remembered--except for the charge of the Light Brigade. (Indeed, two of the British commanders who served there--Lords Raglan and Cardigan--are known more for their contributions to fashion than for their military deeds.) In *Crimea*, Royle (*Winds of Change: The End of Empire in Africa*) remedies this situation. A writer and journalist specializing in military history, he covers not just the Crimea, but also the entire Black Sea region in his beautifully written study. He describes the diplomatic maneuverings that passed between the belligerents and their potential allies (like the United States), and he thoughtfully considers the causes, conduct and consequences of the war. And although he provides a massive amount of detail, it is a testament to his skill that the details never overwhelm the narrative. Thorough and informative, this scholarly book will interest readers of history and military history alike; for the present, it also stands as the definitive treatment of the Crimean War. Illus. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* Mighty wars spring from unusual sources. Four major powers (Britain, France, and Turkey vs. Russia) went to war in 1854 over who should hold the front-door keys to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Scottish historian Royle (*Last Days of the Raj*) shows how this spark ignited smoldering European political tensions. Huge armies battled for two years over a single Russian city, Sebastopol, on the Black Sea. Once it fell to the allies, a peace was quickly engineered that failed to resolve the underlying tensions. The war's chief significance was its innovations: it introduced trench warfare, mined harbors, battlefield nursing, and up-to-the-minute press coverage. Royle's narrative is clear and readable, balancing battle descriptions and political maneuvering. The only flaw is the lack of a large-scale map, though smaller maps appear. Recommended for academic and large public libraries. DBob Persing, Univ. of Pennsylvania Lib., Philadelphia Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.