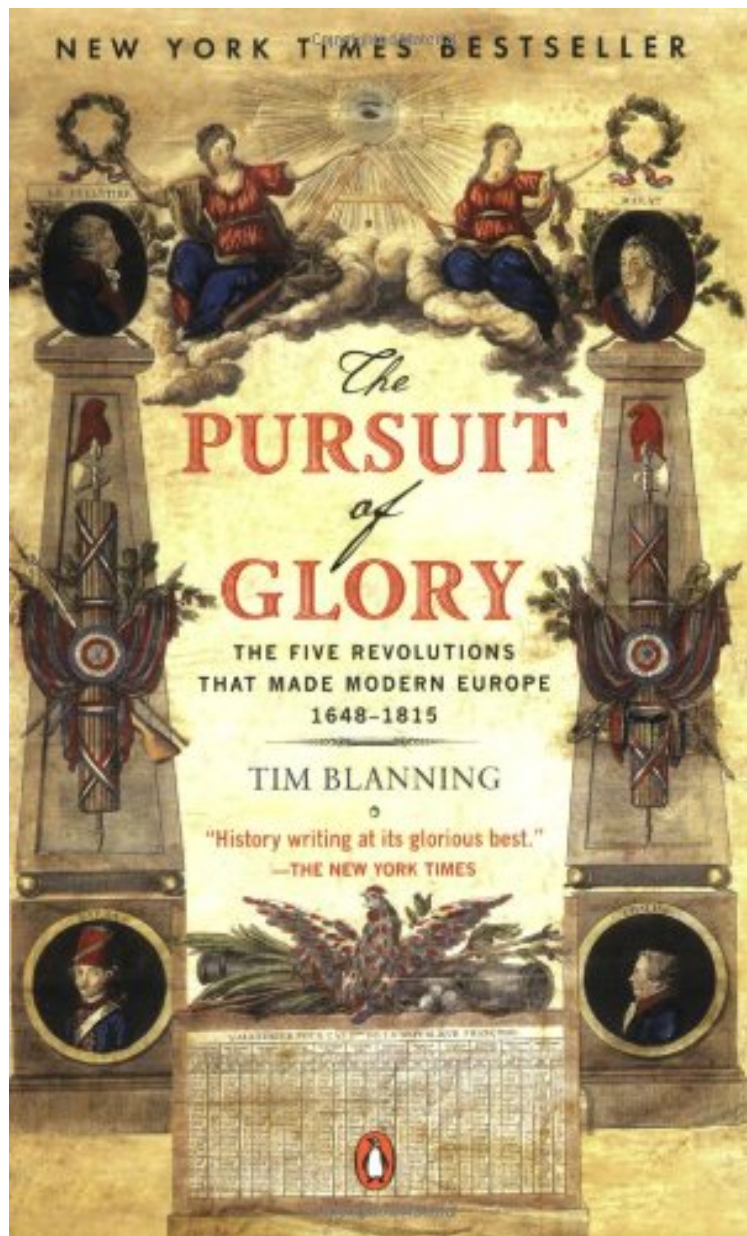


[Online library] The Pursuit of Glory: The Five Revolutions that Made Modern Europe: 1648-1815 (The Penguin History of Europe)

The Pursuit of Glory: The Five Revolutions that Made Modern Europe: 1648-1815 (The Penguin History of Europe)

Tim Blanning

**Download PDF | ePub | DOC | audiobook | ebooks*



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#24238 in Books Tim Blanning 2008-05-27 2008-05-27 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.46 x 1.64 x 5.50, 1.38 #File Name: 0143113895752 pages The Pursuit of Glory The Five Revolutions that Made Modern Europe 1648 1815 Penguin History of Europe | File size: 35.Mb

Tim Blanning : The Pursuit of Glory: The Five Revolutions that Made Modern Europe: 1648-1815 (The Penguin History of Europe) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Pursuit of Glory: The Five Revolutions that Made Modern Europe: 1648-1815 (The Penguin History of Europe)*:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great themes of Enlightenment, the emergence of the nation-state, and the notion of democracy
By Robert J. Crawford
I bought this book in order to read about the aftermath of the Thirty Years War, in which the notion of national sovereignty essentially overtook the extreme fragmentation of the feudal era. What I found instead was a dazzling exposition of the evolution of European society from 1648 to 1815, when Absolutism and the Enlightenment reigned, the State was consolidated and then challenged by the "nation", and the democratic political revolution began and failed, ending in military dictatorship and a war so savage that the destruction and killing were on a par with WWI. The book starts off with a basic analysis on life and death, including how primitive transportation was, how horrendously difficult life really was in the countryside, and how the economy for most had barely changed since antiquity even with steam power and the beginnings of the industrial revolution. People were almost all born poor, worked their entire lives, and died with little prospect of improvement of their station in life. While this in many ways is the driest part of the book, it is essential for what follows and indeed for putting one's modern life in perspective. The chapters on power and institutions were particularly fascinating to me. First, with the consolidation of centralized control and the relative decline of feudal aristocrats, there was the absolutist impulse. This supposedly put unprecedented power into the hands of a sovereign, though Blanning questions whether the notion is as cut and dried as historians have made it out to be. Second, he examines in great detail who the elites were, how they could achieve rank and power, and how their positions were changing. While essentially aristocratic as based on land ownership and religious offices, these bases were giving way to urban centers, merchants, and industrialists, which were more secular; much of this was inchoate until the French Revolution, of course, but he proves it was in motion long before the 19C upheavals we associate with them. Third, he looks at how the function of institutions were changing, as in the development of parliamentary checks and balances but also in the development of a professional bureaucracy staffed by educated men of varying backgrounds. Finally, in reference to the title, Blanning argues that much of what happened was due to the actions of kings and princes, whose principal motivation was personal glory and pride or face. There is also a long section on religion and culture. The church, he argues, experienced a golden age of influence on the powerful and everyday life in spite of the image of Enlightenment challenges to its authority. This was the Baroque age as well as one of protestant diversification. Moreover, he posits, the rationalist philosophies that emerged were largely ignored or superseded by their romantic critics, gaining currency only in limited circles and disciplines. Finally, Blanning explains the political nature behind the art and architecture that arose in this period, with a particular focus on Louis XIV. Again, it is fascinating, a kind of *Kulturgeschichte* expressed in dense and elegant writing, each section a mini-essay that stands on its own. The concluding chapters on the military situation, with a focus on Alfred the Great (with a militarization of a society) and Napoleon (using citizens to mobilize for total war), were too brief in my view, skimming over what were immensely complex wars and rapidly evolving political systems. I was disappointed because these were the questions I wanted addressed in great detail, but then, this is not a linear history on politics and war. I will have to seek it elsewhere. A great theme I took away was how the state came to merge with the "nation" in this period, not only ending the sprawling and loosely organized multi-ethnic empires, but also bringing a new sense of identity as belonging to a political entity that is supposed to be more representative, if not yet democratic. Though a bit unusual in its organization - it is not a narrative history and follows no clear chronological order - this book offers a wonderful reading experience about the early modern period in European history. It is organized about broad themes and hence not for everyone, but it absorbed my attention for a full 6 weeks of delight and near complete satisfaction. While it would be better to have some idea of what events were taking place, Blanning alludes to them in passing - this will slow some readers down, but is more or less sufficient. Finally, I would have preferred extensive footnotes, but it is not an academic book so much as a popular history. There is a good annotated bibliography.
Recommended warmly.
2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An Ambitious Book
By David Montgomery
I found *Pursuit of Glory* to be an extremely erudite analysis of Europe from 1648 to the end of the Napoleonic War in 1815, but a difficult read in some instances. The material covered is broad, which has some effect in the flow of the book. There is a prodigious amount of information in this substantial volume. Topics ranging from infrastructure such as road systems to religious beliefs and practices including the prosecution of witches in the earlier period of the years covered in this book, all make for an informative reading experience. The various wars fought throughout the continent, the different monarchies, the growth of nations and their military and economic stature, the age of reason, the role of religion, and so many other facets to life and change in Europe all receive attention. Personally, I love reading books like this that have so much to offer, but I think in this case, it contributed to my slower progress in the time it took to complete the book. The book seemed to lack in some of the characteristics found in other narrative histories, which I prefer, but I think my own ignorance of many aspects of this

period in history accounted for this slower progress as well. The various monarchs discussed, the age of Napoleon, and other topics proved easier to digest, at least for me. The "Enlightenment" age comes into focus; the age of reason and scientific advancement as well as the strength of religious influences are all discussed to show what was changing and what wasn't. The role of music and art are other areas of concern used to demonstrate changing attitudes. So many fascinating subjects are touched upon. For those more interested in the campaigns and battles fought, you'll get a good taste of these fields to, though not with great depth. What really comes into focus throughout this book is the changing power structures in Europe, i.e. which countries were rising in prowess and which ones were slowly lessening in influence, especially in regards to their economic, political, and military clout. Good examples are found in the major players such as France, England, Russia, Prussia and the German states, and others as well. Be prepared to be bombarded with a lot of information on various aspects of European history covering the span of about 150 years in this very ambitious and substantial book. Blanning did not use footnotes or endnotes in this book, which some will like and others won't. Needless to say, he seems to know his subject matter well. A challenging, but worthwhile read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Customerpleased

"History writing at its glorious best."--The New York Times "A triumphant success. [Blanning] brings knowledge, expertise, sound judgment and a colorful narrative style."--The Economist The New York Times bestselling volume in the Penguin History of Europe series Between the end of the Thirty Years' War and the Battle of Waterloo, Europe underwent an extraordinary transformation that saw five of the modern world's great revolutions--scientific, industrial, American, French, and romantic. In this much-admired addition to the monumental Penguin History of Europe series, Tim Blanning brilliantly investigates the forces that transformed Europe from a medieval society into a vigorous powerhouse of the modern world. Blanning renders this vast subject immediate and absorbing by making fresh connections between the most mundane details of life and the major cultural, political, and technological transformations that birthed the modern age.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . This new volume in the Penguin History of Europe series is a wonderful achievement, particularly so considering the mammoth amount of specialist material that required synthesizing into digestible portions for general consumption. Blanning, professor of modern history at the University of Cambridge, has performed the miracle of balancing and blending traditional political and diplomatic accounts with the newer fields of social, economic and intellectual history. A prime example of this is the author's treatment of the impact of the new "public sphere." As people discoursed through coffeehouses, Masonic organizations or periodicals, "a new source of authority emerged to challenge the opinion-makers of the old regime: public opinion." Countries where this public sphere was left free, as in Britain or the Dutch Republic, tended to be more politically stable than, say, France, where suppression ended in bloody revolution. Blanning narrates the story of Europe from the end of the Thirty Years' War to the end of the Napoleonic wars, when secularization and the primacy of state sovereignty were recognized as the key attributes of the coming era. What the Europeans would eventually get was the secular, martial religion of nationalism. But this is the subject for a subsequent volume which will be hard-pressed to match this splendid one. (June 4) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. In 1648 the Peace of Westphalia brought the Thirty Years War to an end. Although the Europeans didn't know it, of course, this devastating conflict would prove to be the last of the Wars of Religion that had been tearing the continent apart since the start of the Reformation in 1517. Europe was entering a new age. Despite the Renaissance, it was still a largely medieval world in its outlook, infrastructure and government in 1648. Europe was less wealthy and, in many ways, less economically advanced than other parts of the world, like Mughal India and China. By 1815, the year of the Battle of Waterloo, Europe was recognizably modern. It was also far in advance of the rest of the world economically, scientifically, technologically, politically and militarily. So the period between these two dates is the very hinge of European history. It is no small accomplishment to cover so vast a subject adequately in a single volume. But Tim Blanning, a professor of modern history at Cambridge and a fellow of the British Academy, not only does so, he also triumphs at it. The Pursuit of Glory, at 708 pages, is not a short read, but it is so well written that for those who love history, it is a page turner. Mr. Blanning accomplishes his task not by taking a strictly chronological approach but by dealing with various aspects of a rapidly changing Europe one by one. Consider communications. In 1648 the main roads in Europe were mostly the ones that the Romans had built 1,500 years earlier and that had been neglected ever since. The pace of travel, therefore, was seldom more than the speed a man could make on his own two feet, which, indeed, is how most people traveled. What coaches there were were wretched and slow. In 1708 an envoy from Louis XIV to Madrid reported from Bayonne, in southwestern France, that he had been nine days on the road and expected that he would need another two weeks to reach the Spanish capital. But by the end of the period, roads had much improved in Western Europe and with it the speed of travel. In France travel times were cut in half and the comfort of riding in coaches much improved by the better roads. In Britain matters were even better. The trip from Bath to London took 50 hours in 1700. By 1800 it took 16. These greatly improved roads allowed other improvements, like much more efficient and much less costly postal service. This sort of history can be deadly dull, an endless recitation

of facts and statistics. In Mr. Blanning's hands it is not, because he has a keen eye for the exactly opposite contemporary quotation. The people who lived through this transportation revolution regarded it with the same wonder that we regard, say, the global positioning systems that now keep us from getting lost. In 1754 a newspaper advertisement proclaimed, However incredible it may appear, this coach will actually arrive in London four days after leaving Manchester. Mr. Blanning is also the master of the unexpected connection. The greatly improved roads, and thus greatly increased traffic, had an entirely unanticipated consequence: highwaymen. The reason that the 18th century saw these gentlemen of the road turn into figures of romance and legend is simply that the improved roads provided them with so many more people of whom they could demand that they stand and deliver. Mr. Blanning uses this technique over and over, always with good effect. Why did France develop economically so much more slowly than Britain in the 18th century, with huge political consequences? One important reason was that Britain had an internal common market, but France was still riddled with internal tariffs and local taxes, causing no end of economic discontinuities. An English traveler reported in 1786 that a nobleman of Berry told me that on one side of a rivulet which flows by his chateau, salt is sold at 40 sols a bushel, and on the other ... at 40 times as much. In consequence of this, no less than two thousand troops of horse and foot were stationed on its banks to check smugglers. While everyone likely to read this book has heard of the scientific revolution, brought about by people like Isaac Newton, and the industrial revolution that began toward the end of the period (both well covered here), the agricultural revolution occurring at the same time was equally important. In 1648 European agriculture had not changed much since medieval times. But enclosure, manuring, crop rotation, new crops like turnips and clover, and improved breeding brought forth a large increase in food production. One result was a golden age for the landed gentry, whose rent rolls increased sharply, and their conspicuous consumption along with them. (Robert Walpole employed 50 people just to weed his gardens.) Another result was the freeing of manpower to work in the factories that were beginning to spring up in the English countryside. The industrial revolution came about because of turnips as well as steam engines. Mr. Blanning thoroughly covers the politics and endless wars of the era. These power shifts were not unconnected with the two great political trends in Europe in this period: the development of representative government in Britain and the Dutch Republic and the growth of royal absolutism in much of the rest of Europe. Change thus came about in manageable increments in Britain, allowing it both to modernize efficiently and to accommodate a potent new political force public opinion, made possible by coffee houses and newspapers while change was bottled up until it exploded in France. Even here, Mr. Blanning presents the historical nuggets that bring this book to such vibrant life. When Louis XVI learned that he was to die on the guillotine the next morning, he sent a servant to fetch a copy of David Hume's History of England to learn how Charles I had faced his own execution. "The Pursuit of Glory" is history writing at its glorious best. John Steele Gordon (author of "An Empire of Wealth: The Epic History of American Economic Power"), "The New York Times" a History writing at its glorious best. a "The New York Times" a Magnificent. Exhilarating. [Blanning has] the acuity of vision to focus on the particular without ever needing to sacrifice the broader perspective. a "The Sunday Times" (London) a A triumphant success. [Blanning] brings knowledge, experience, sound judgment, and a colorful narrative style. a "The Economist" History writing at its glorious best. "The New York Times" Magnificent. Exhilarating. [Blanning has] the acuity of vision to focus on the particular without ever needing to sacrifice the broader perspective. "The Sunday Times" (London) A triumphant success. [Blanning] brings knowledge, experience, sound judgment, and a colorful narrative style. "The Economist" History writing at its glorious best. ? "The New York Times" ? Magnificent. Exhilarating. [Blanning has] the acuity of vision to focus on the particular without ever needing to sacrifice the broader perspective. ? "The Sunday Times" (London) ? A triumphant success. [Blanning] brings knowledge, experience, sound judgment, and a colorful narrative style. ? "The Economist" About the Author Tim Blanning is professor of modern history at the University of Cambridge, a Fellow of the British Academy, and the author and editor of numerous books on European history. He appears regularly on BBC Radio in England.