



Alexander I: Tsar of War and Peace

Alan Palmer

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As Alan Palmer himself writes in his preface, 'Alexander 1, ruler of Russia for the first quarter of the nineteenth century, is remembered today mainly on three counts: as the Tsar who refused to make peace with the French when Moscow fell in 1812; as the idealist who sought to bind Europe's sovereigns in a Holy Alliance in 1815; and as the Emperor who died - or gave the impression of having died - at the remote southern seaport of Taganrog in the winter of 1825. Recent interest has concentrated, perhaps excessively, on the third of these dramatic episodes although it is natural that the epic years of the struggle with Napoleon should continue to excite the historical imagination.'

He has been dubbed 'The Enigmatic Tsar'. There are many contrasting opinions of him. Thomas Jefferson declared 'A more virtuous man, I believe, does not exist, nor one who is more enthusiastically devoted to better the condition of mankind. Castlereagh thought well of him, too, but both Metternich and Napoleon considered him inconsistent and untrustworthy. And Pushkin famously described him as 'a Sphinx who carried his riddle with him to the tomb.' an assessment even more piquant if it is true, as some maintain, his tomb is empty.

With his customary blend of meticulous scholarship and agreeable writing, Alan Palmer provides the most balanced and engaging portrait imaginable.

'A pleasure to read and unlikely to be replaced for many years' Philip Ziegler, *The Times*

'Excellent . . . a major biographical achievement, a notable contribution to our understanding of this still enigmatic monarch' Robert Blake, *Spectator*

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