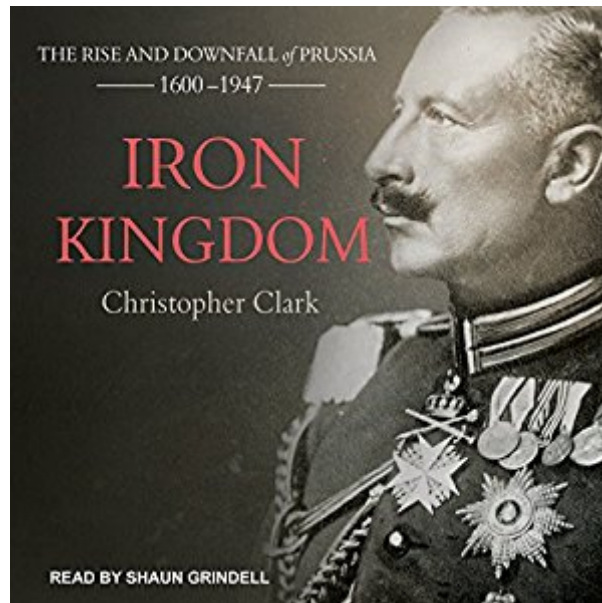


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Iron Kingdom: The Rise And Downfall Of Prussia, 1600-1947



Synopsis

In the aftermath of World War II, Prussia - a centuries-old state pivotal to Europe's development - ceased to exist. In their eagerness to erase all traces of the Third Reich from the earth, the Allies believed that Prussia, the very embodiment of German militarism, had to be abolished. But as Christopher Clark reveals in this pioneering history, Prussia's legacy is far more complex. What we find is a kingdom that existed nearly half a millennium ago as a patchwork of territorial fragments, with neither significant resources nor a coherent culture. With its capital in Berlin, Prussia grew from being a small, poor, disregarded medieval state into one of the most vigorous and powerful nations in Europe. Iron Kingdom traces Prussia's involvement in the continent's foundational religious and political conflagrations: from the devastations of the Thirty Years' War through centuries of political machinations to the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, from the enlightenment of Frederick the Great to the destructive conquests of Napoleon, and from the "iron and blood" policies of Bismarck to the creation of the German Empire in 1871 and all that implied for the tumultuous 20th century.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 28 hours & 30 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Tantor Audio

Audible.com Release Date: February 14, 2017

Language: English

ASIN: B01MTFXQ4I

Best Sellers Rank: #22 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Europe #29 in Books > History > Europe > Germany #65 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Military

Customer Reviews

The greatest offering of this book for me personally, as a student of government administration, were the many scenarios the leaders of Prussia faced. Somehow, it still seems surreal that in such a short span of time, the kingdom of Prussia was wiped out of existence. Clark creates a historical perspective that is both fair to Prussia and honest in the larger context of history, especially WWII and the Nazi usurpation of power, culture and history of Prussia in the larger context of Germany. I can't help but notice the parallels between the conservative, privileged agrarian Junker class and the Confederacy of the US and how both were led to a path of destruction by a particularist view

that they should be allowed, at any cost, to maintain their political hegemony to the expense of other citizens and legitimate sources of political power. Germany engaged an open and honest reckoning with its past behavior when one group of people decided for whatever arbitrary reason, that they were more privileged than other people, but the US has yet to do so. There is much to be discerned from this story that's still relevant to the current political environment. Aside from that, any student of government administration will find an invaluable history of the evolution of monarchy to modern sovereign state, including its structures, mechanisms, politics and ultimately its successes and failures - in one of the most historically important empires of Europe.

This is an excellent book, very well written and informative. It is not light reading, but is still very accessible. You will learn a great deal about Prussian/German history, which will give great context to WWI and WWII. Sometimes it's overly detailed, and the back and forth analysis sometimes feels a bit like ping pong. But the author is very insightful and you will learn a lot about history and, more importantly, human nature. I definitely recommend this book.

Well researched and written book. Prussian military actions over the centuries has been well documented but this book gives you more. It was more tolerant and forward thinking than most other countries of its time. Unfortunately I think Prussia was cursed by geography in that it was too separated by land from Brandenburg, which was the cause of many of the conflicts, and their failure to evolve from militarism. After WW1. Prussia's defeat in WW2 sealed its fate.

Iron Kingdom is a must-read for any scholar attempting to understand the history of Prussia or Germany in general vis-a-vis Prussian influence in the German states and Europe. The book starts out with the land purchase of Brandenburg by the Hohenzollerns, runs the course of nearly 350 years to modern day Germany and its demise in World War II. It is excellent in its detailed overview of events, not just from the perspective of monarchs and kings, but in the overall attempt to portray the socio-economic conditions and manifestations of various conflicts and conditions. While Clark does go into quite elaborate detail into, sometimes, seemingly trivial components of every day life in Prussia, he quickly self-corrects. This effort is part of a more meaningful attempt at painting an elaborate picture. What the book lacks in proper narration, more than makes up for in astonishing levels of background research and critical information to a comprehensive history of Prussia, if one can describe it so. Another aspect that was overlooked involved events and individuals external to Prussia, but which have affected and influenced Prussia in one form or another. As an example,

Catherine the Great, herself a native Pomeranian, should have been acknowledged in the book, and the overall impact of such a figure on the history of Prussia itself examined more closely. However, I still gave the book five stars because the author accomplished exactly what he had claimed and had set out to do: provide a comprehensive history of Prussia from Brandenburg to the demise of the third Reich. He excelled in doing so. I recommend the book to anyone literate enough in European and German history.

A detailed and balanced account of the history of Prussia, the Hohenzollern family and the Prussian people - but never boring. Christopher Clark has - in my view - put significantly more research into this work than other historians on the same topic. He remains focussed and relevant; never falls for pathos or PR. Above all: he reports; he does not judge.

A nicely done history of Germany, which will go a long way toward helping one understand the German psyche: which is what I was after. It was not the 'page turner' some other reviewers have indicated but, to those truly interested in trying to understand German history, this should not constitute a serious drawback. I believe the book might have benefitted from a summary of lessons taught/learned as a final chapter. The author seemed to end his work rather abruptly. On the other hand, when one summarizes history such often ends up being a selective/subjective summary. The omission of such in this book could actually be viewed as a strength, in that it leaves the reader to draw his or her own conclusions. Overall, I rate this a valuable work.

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