



The Crimean War

Hugh Small

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In the winter of 1854, Britain, France, and Turkey, with Europe-wide support, invaded Russia and besieged the fortress of Sebastopol in the Crimea. It was the most destructive conflict of the century, with total fatalities comparable to those of the American Civil War. Hugh Small, whose biography of Florence Nightingale first exposed the truth about her wartime hospital, now shows how the history of the Crimean War was manipulated to conceal Britain's – and Europe's – failure.

Only since the collapse of the Soviet Union has it become clear how much was at stake in the Crimea. The failure of Britain's politicians to control their generals led to the collapse of the peacekeeping arrangements of the 'Concert of Europe' – a sort of early UN Security Council. Russian expansion continued unchecked, leading to the divisions seen today in the Ukraine and the Caucasus.

Small is equally revealing about the battles. His carefully-researched account of the famous Charge of the Light Brigade overturns the standard account that it was a blunder by senior officers. It was the ordinary cavalrymen who insisted on it – as the Commander-in-Chief admitted in Parliament at the time.

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