

Napoleon's Master: A Life of Prince Talleyrand

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Born into the high aristocracy, where rank meant more than wealth, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord was to become one of the great politicians of all time. His early career in politics was marked with turmoil: a liberal who saw the need to curb the powers of the monarchy, Talleyrand fled from France when the violence of the revolution turned extreme in 1792, first to England and then to the United States. It was not until his return to France after the dust had settled in 1796 that his star would begin to rise in earnest.

First, he was appointed Foreign Minister. In this position, he aligned himself with the charismatic general who would become Emperor of France: Napoleon Bonaparte.

In the course of the next three decades, Talleyrand would prove himself perhaps the most adept politician of all time: his political pliability allowed him to survive the fall of Bonaparte and the consequent second Bourbon restoration. He was in the shadow of power in Europe through more upheaval than perhaps any other person of his generation.

Napoleon's Master is a riveting portrait of an eternally fascinating man.

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