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*Ed West*

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On June 15, 1215 England's drunken, lecherous, cowardly King John was forced by his leading barons into a peace treaty that would have a profound impact on the country and the world. It came about over discontent with the incompetent monarch, but it established fundamental principles about the rule of law that would spread to the English colonies and worldwide. This Magna Carta, as it became known later that century, would form the basis of the rule of law and due process in England and around the globe. In this accessible introduction to the subject Ed West explains how the Great Charter came about, and follows the story of the relentlessly cruel and money-obsessed early Plantagenet kings, including John's permanently angry father Henry and his sadistic maniac of a brother, Richard the Lionheart. Eventually John, after betraying his father and brother, selling his wife, murdering his nephew and losing his French empire through sheer incompetence and weasel-like cowardice, reluctantly agreed to a charter that paved the way for our freedom. And as Winston Churchill put it, the English-speaking world owes 'far more to the vices of John than to the labours of virtuous sovereigns'.

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