

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this book is Weber's examination of the paradoxes of French society at the turn of the century. On the one hand, the *fin de siècle* was represented by its artists and intellectuals as an age of decadence and pessimism, marked by the flight from politics and everyday reality into private paradises via drugs, the occult, or subjective aesthetics. On the other hand, Weber stresses, this was a period of real social progress, when average people were able to enjoy the benefits of modernity, such as more extensive health care, expanded leisure time, electric lighting, the telegraph and the telephone, bicycles, automobiles, vacations, and sporting events. Perhaps in response to recent critics of modernity, Weber reminds us of the general improvement in the quality of life of millions, a fact that was "misjudged and misrepresented" by the "fashionable perception" of the time.

The *fin de siècle* was above all a time of movement, but not necessarily progress. While the political and financial scandals of the Third Republic may have provided cause for artists and intellectuals to become cynical about the effectiveness of practical action, domestic developments such as anarchism, the Dreyfus Affair, and the rise of labor unions aroused intellectuals from their aesthetic detachment to become engaged in political and social affairs. Whereas the humiliating defeat at the hands of the Prussians in 1870-71 may have left many feeling that France had become physically degenerate and ineffectual in the world arena, the increasing popularity of physical fitness and sporting events, such as the *Tour de France*, provided many with a renewed vigor and sense of patriotic purpose that pulled them from their former *ennui* and lassitude. The century ended on a note of optimism for the one to come, with a sense of vitality and nationalism that, as we have come to realize only through hindsight, would end in disaster fourteen years later.

Eugen Weber's *France: Fin de siècle* is a moving and enjoyable book that will be of great value to educators. While providing a sweeping view of the period, it inspires one to learn more, to dig deeper in areas that are of interest, and reminds the student of the "larger picture," which Weber brushes with great skill and clarity. It would be an excellent text for adoption in either undergraduate or graduate history courses, and a fine complement to more detailed studies of the *fin de siècle*.

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Ruth Henig. *The Origins of the First World War.* Lancaster Pamphlets. London and New York: Routledge, 1989. Pp. xii, 49. Paper, \$7.95.

Holger H. Herwig. *The Outbreak of World War I. Problems in European Civilization.* 5th ed. Lexington, MA: Heath. Pp. xix, 139. Paper, \$13.40.

Who was responsible for the outbreak of war in Europe, during the summer of 1914? The question of accountability is still an absorbing one for scholars, despite the intervening decades. In fact, the old arguments over "war guilt" have taken on renewed significance in light of the current instability in the Balkans. Two recent books that address the events that led to World War I are *The Origins of the First World War*, by Ruth Henig, and *The Outbreak of World War I*, edited by Holger H. Herwig.

Henig, an authority on British foreign policy and a lecturer at the University of Lancaster, in Lancaster, England, provides a clear, succinct explanation of the political and economic factors that influenced the European powers to respond as they did, when mounting internal and external pressures increasingly threatened "vital national objectives." According to Henig, most of the European governments believed as early as 1912 that diplomacy and negotiation had failed and that a European war was inevitable. The leaders of Austria-Hungary and Russia,

the "ramshackle empires of eastern Europe," were determined to bolster the waning status of their empires as great powers; the ruling cabal in Berlin, frustrated by thwarted international ambitions, saw war on Germany's timetable as the only way out of a political and diplomatic stalemate. Germany took advantage of the crisis caused by the assassination at Sarajevo in order to go to war before Russia and France completed their preparations. Maintaining the balance of power in Europe gave Britain and France no choice but to fight.

Henig does an excellent job at clarifying the convolutions of European diplomacy and alliances as well as in explaining the objectives of the belligerents. The final segment of the book, "The Historical Debate," is devoted to a discussion of the many opposing views of Germany's responsibility. The result of Henig's careful explanatory style and even-handed approach is a book that should prove enormously useful as an introductory source for college-level students.

The fifth edition of *The Outbreak of World War I*, from D. C. Heath's Problems in European Civilization series, has been completely overhauled by Holger H. Herwig, an authority on German naval history, who currently teaches at the University of Calgary. Unfortunately, the revision process appears to have disposed of the baby, along with the bath water. In earlier editions, the editor, Dwight E. Lee, included excerpts from such authors as Count Max Montgelas (who helped to draft Germany's response to the accusations of war guilt), Camille Bloch, G.P. Gooch, and A.J.P. Taylor, as well as the fascinating results of a concerted attempt by French and German historians, in 1951, to "agree upon the views to be expressed in history texts." The updated version eliminates all of these sources in favor of more recent scholarship, focusing upon the controversy raised by Fritz Fischer's assertions, in 1961, that the German leadership had maneuvered the European countries into a state of war. The new book certainly is more attractive than the old, but the selections included would make difficult reading for most college students.

Still, Herwig's compilation includes good material, as well as his excellent introduction. In one fascinating essay, "Austria-Hungary Opts for War," written by Samuel R. Williamson, Jr., the author explains that the Habsburg empire, resorting to a military campaign out of "exhaustion of patience and imagination," was unable to move more quickly in July 1914, since a large number of troops were on harvest leave. Their immediate recall would have attracted the attention of the rival powers, as well as leaving the crops unharvested.

Another useful essay is "The Liberals Muddle Through to Continental Commitment," by Zara Steiner. Steiner explains that during the days preceding Great Britain's entry into the war, Germany's assault upon Belgium gave the British public a long-awaited outlet for years of "latent anti-German feeling" and ensured that the British public would accept a decision for war with jubilation. During the dilemma, however, the vacillating cabinet ministers "felt that they were living in a world created by H. G. Wells."

A combination of new scholarship with some of the earlier sources might have provided excellent material on the war guilt controversy to instructors and advanced students. Instead, Herwig's edition has turned a few decades into centuries, relegating the events of 1914 to the distant past.

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R. A. C. Parker. *Struggle for Survival: The History of the Second World War.* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. Pp. 328. Cloth, \$23.50; paper, \$9.95.

Over fifty years have passed since Hitler sent his legions into Poland, thus initiating a conflict that would ultimately consume somewhere between forty and sixty million lives.