

a survey or term course dealing with the French Revolution as part of a larger appreciation of Europe during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

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David Stevenson. *The Outbreak of the First World War: 1914 in Perspective.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. Pp. xiv, 72. Paper, \$10.95; ISBN 0-312-16539-0. **P.M.H. Bell.** *The Origins of the Second World War in Europe.* London & New York: Longman, 1997. Second edition. Pp. xiii, 370. \$15.96; ISBN 0-582-30470-9.

Explanations of why wars break out have become far more subtle than they were even a few generations ago. Theoretical works like Geoffrey Blainey's *The Causes of War* (3rd edition, 1988) and any number of detailed expositions on the genesis of specific wars use a whole new arsenal of theory and analysis to explain events.

The two books under review here sum up recent scholarship on the related questions of why World War I broke out and why World War II emerged from the still warm ashes of the first war. In *The Outbreak of the First World War: 1914 in Perspective*, David Stevenson of the London School of Economics, a distinguished scholar of international relations, tries to explain why the assassination of an unloved royal heir in a squalid Balkan city led to the deaths of ten million men and the reshaping of the European power structure.

Deliberately avoiding a narrative history—he refers his readers to the standard works by Luigi Albertini and A.J.P. Taylor—Stevenson discusses what each major continental power contributed to the July Crisis. In a brief but very dense analysis, Stevenson explains how investigations into the origins of World War I have changed over the years. Earlier writers, from the days just after the war up to Albertini in the 1940s, looked at the international system as a whole. The second phase of scholarship, initiated by Fritz Fischer's *Griff nach der Weltmacht* (1961), focused on domestic politics inside the Great Powers. The third phase, sparked by heightened Cold War tensions of the later 1970s, looked at technical matters, such as war plans and intelligence, to determine whether the outbreak of war in 1914 was inadvertent or spawned by the systems that then prevailed. In the most recent decade, scholars have returned to exploring the role of national governments, adding to their studies the influence of cultural factors on world politics.

From this welter of research, Stevenson concludes that the Central Powers should bear primary, but not sole, responsibility for the war, with “inadvertence” and “miscalculation” being part of the equation. The lack of a strong anti-war movement also led to the outbreak of the war. Imperialism and other factors, he believes, were far

less a cause of war than the leaders' feelings of insecurity and their fear of their neighbors.

Stevenson's study is a splendid summation of the current state of scholarly opinion on the outbreak of World War I. Unfortunately for classroom use, his book requires that the reader bring a great deal of knowledge to the text, and for that reason, it would not fare well in a typical undergraduate class. Perhaps its greatest value will be to graduate students, who will welcome its concise summary of complicated questions.

Stevenson ends by observing that the war lasting for four years created the "indispensable precondition" for World War II. The second book under review here, P.M.H. Bell, *The Origins of the Second World War in Europe*, examines that theory, among others. I used Bell's book as a text for a senior-graduate course, "Europe in the Age of the Dictators, 1914-1945," in the hope that it would provide a thread to draw the course material together. Other texts in the course included Bullock on Hitler, Conquest on Stalin, and Philip Morgan's examination of Italian Fascism. My plan did not work. My conclusion is that students today are prepared to deal with facts; they are not prepared to deal with argumentation. It is entirely possible that another instructor might have a far better result with the book, which is excellent.

What Bell does is examine the Thirty Years War thesis, that World War I initiated a series of events leading inevitably to World War II. Even more succinctly, the theory is that World War II was only the continuation of World War I.

Bell looks in detail at the totalitarian and democratic nations during the interwar period and provides a sensible and balanced narrative. In particular, he looks at the role of ideology, economic issues, and "strategy and armed force." Each of those has borne the weight of blame for the war. Critical to the development of events, Bell claims, was the loss of stability fathered by the Great War. He notes also that the crisis that led to World War I had a short incubation period, essentially the month of July 1914, while World War II developed over a much longer period, with critical events occurring at least as early as the Spanish Civil War in 1936. In the last third of his book, Bell looks at the decay of peace in those years before the war from 1932 to 1939, and then at the spread of the war from 1939 to 1941.

To his credit, Bell offers no final answers, instead noting that new evidence and new interpretations constantly change our vision of those years. Against the view that World War II was a renewed conflict, not a new one, when it engulfed Europe in 1939-1941, he sets the fact that Italy had changed sides from the time of World War I, and Russia (in the guise of the Soviet Union) stayed neutral until June 1941.

In his conclusion, Bell claims that the war came about as a consequence of three major elements: the expansionism of Germany and Italy; the willingness of the other nations of Europe to allow that expansion for a time; and finally, the realization by the leaders of those other nations that the maintenance of their Great Power status, indeed

their very survival, required them to oppose the expansionist states. Thus, the war came from Germany's expansionism (Italy was no threat by itself), which the threatened nations finally confronted. That set of causes does not relate directly to World War I, so Bell is refuting the Thirty Years War thesis, although he admits that the preconditions of events might go back to 1914-1918. In brief, war was bound to come in the late 1930s unless Germany limited its expansionism, which was not likely.

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Charles G. Cogan. *Charles de Gaulle: A Brief Biography with Documents*. Boston & New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996. Pp. xii, 243. Cloth, \$45.00; ISBN 0-312-12804-5. Paper, \$12.95; ISBN 0-312-10790-0.

The Bedford Series in History and Culture has produced a good book for history classes, although not a perfect one. Charles G. Cogan's study of Charles de Gaulle is organized in two parts. The first two-thirds of the book is a chronological narrative with a good, if markedly sympathetic, summary of de Gaulle's views. The remainder is a collection of documents organized around the same themes: saving the nation, reorganizing the state, foreign relations, and legacy. According to Cogan, de Gaulle restored France's sense of worth after the 1940 collapse, preserved French identity during the Cold War despite U.S. demands for solidarity, enabled France to survive the Second World War and the Algerian War, and ended the debilitating right-left split in French politics by establishing a presidency more powerful than Parliament. Furthermore, he failed to "de-Atlanticize" NATO and the Common Market, impeded European integration for 20 years, and transformed French foreign policy by creating an alliance with Germany. The documents, which Cogan carefully selected, capably translated, and introduced with students in mind, are excellent, and the maps, study questions, and suggested readings in English are useful, too. Throughout the book there are good explanations following the mention of historical characters and events, though some are in inconvenient notes at the end of chapters.

Some Cogan expressions, like "prudential symbiosis" might confuse students. And his interpretation can be a bit mystical, as when he says de Gaulle sensed the perception in the country that he was getting too old to lead and "whether consciously or not, arranged his own-forced-abdication."

The author refers to the French Revolution of 1789 frequently, but his grasp on that complex era is questionable. Ignoring economics, war, and intrigue, he blames both the Reign of Terror and the advent of Bonaparte on the idea that supreme power could be vested in a national Parliament.