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1913: The Eve Of War



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THE EVE OF WAR

PAUL HAM



Synopsis

Christmas 1913. In Britain, people are debating a new dance called 'the tango'. In Germany, they are fascinated by the wedding of the Kaiser's daughter to the Duke of Brunswick. Little did they know that their world was on 'The Eve of War', a catastrophe that was to engulf the continent, cost millions of lives, and change the course of the century. And yet behind the scenes, the Great Powers were marching towards what they thought was an inevitable conflict. In this controversial and concise essay, the military historian Paul Ham argues that the First World War was not an historical mistake, a conflict into which the Great Powers stumbled by accident. Nor was it a justified war, in which uncontained German aggression had to be defeated. Instead the politicians and generals of the day willed the war, and prepared for it "but eventually found themselves caught up in an inferno they could no longer control. 'The Eve of War' is a brilliant re-examination of the causes of the First World War that is both an introduction to one of the most complex subjects in history and an original and thought-provoking contribution to the debate over the origins of the conflict. Paul Ham's military histories have been widely praised. "[A] vivid, comprehensive and quietly furious account...Paul Ham brings new tools to the job, unearthing fresh evidence of a deeply disturbing sort. He has a magpie eye for the telling detail" - Ben Macintyre The Times. "Provocative and challenging..A voice that is both vigorous and passionate" - Christopher Sylvester, Daily Express. "Controversial...Well documented and stringently argued" - Peter Lewis, Daily Mail. Paul Ham is the author of the forthcoming 1914: The Year the World Ended, to be published by Random House in Britain in 2014. He has previously written the acclaimed Sandakan, Kokoda, Vietnam: The Australian War and Hiroshima Nagasaki. A former Australia Correspondent of the Sunday Times, he was born in Sydney and educated in Australia and Britain. He now lives in Sydney and Paris. Endeavour Press is the UK's leading independent publisher of digital books.

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Customer Reviews

Author Paul Hamâ™s 1913: Eve of War is an illuminating and provocative brief history of the how the great powers of Europe (Britain, France, Germany, and Russia) inexorably prepared both their armies and their peoples as prelude to the events of August 1914 that served to ignite World War I. Hamâ™s stated objective is to dispel the long established historical theory that the governments of Europe groped blindly towards war. He characterizes 1913 as a period when the threat of a European war reached a fever pitch resulting from many years of war preparation efforts among the great powers. Readers will learn that the economies of Britain, France, Germany, and to a lesser extent, Russia, prospered from industrialization and imperialism during the period of 1880 to 1913. This prosperity supported the competitive development of military strength and armaments (nominally for defensive purposes), and extensive war plans by the great powers – essentially what we would now call an arms race. Significantly, it also nurtured among the establishment and youth of each nation strong feelings of patriotism and racial pride that were fanned by an often rabid press. Germany feared being encircled by Russia and France; the British feared the rapid expansion of German sea power; while France both feared and loathed Germany after its bitter loss of the Alsace- Lorraine territories in the 1871 Franco Prussian War. Alliances were formed: Britain, France, and Russia became the Triple Entente; Germany and Austria-Hungary were allies joined by Turkey in October 1914 to become the Triple Alliance. The assassination of the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand by a Serbian terrorist in August 1914 became the spark that ignited WWI, a war that endured for five years with casualties approaching 20 million persons.

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