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AMERICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE ORIGINS OF WORLD WAR I,
1914-1935: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

by

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B.A. Montana State University, 1957

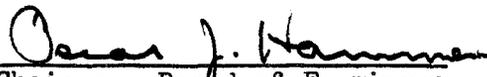
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter	
I. INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE, 1914-1920	4
II. ORIGINS OF WORLD WAR I AS VIEWED BY AMERICAN HISTORIANS, 1914-1920	28
III. REVELATIONS BEARING ON THE ORIGINS OF THE WAR, 1917-1930	106
IV. ORIGINS OF WORLD WAR I AS VIEWED BY AMERICAN HISTORIANS AFTER 1920	122
CONCLUSION	207
BIBLIOGRAPHY	219

INTRODUCTION

The task of writing a contemporary history is surrounded by more than the ordinary difficulties common to any scholarly effort. Scarcely a month passes without the publication of letters, memoirs, biographies or other evidence which may supplement or refute what has previously been accepted as fact. Also political shifts--a presidential election campaign, a war or domestic economic unrest--often alter perspectives as to the wisdom of past policies.

The twentieth century historian in writing on the causes of recent wars has enjoyed one advantage. In earlier times, the archives or repositories of belligerent nations have been closed to non-official readers for a period of forty to eighty years after cessation of hostilities.¹ This was not the case, however, after World War I, yet the historian, during the first years, had access to only a limited and edited amount of information. A radical change occurred after 1920 when many of the national archives of the erstwhile belligerent powers were opened to scholars. It was inevitable that a drastic revision of judgments reached during the war would follow the publication of so much new evidence.

¹Harry E. Barnes, History and Social Intelligence (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), p. 227.

Historians who had written without reserve during and immediately after the war saw themselves confronted with the need of revising their own judgments or having others do the job for them.

A case in point was the American historian during and after World War I. Prior to the American entry in 1917, public opinion in the United States was divided. The declaration of war, however, forced the consensus of the American people along one line with one ultimate goal, the complete defeat of the Central Powers. To assure an united home front, the government set out through the use of propaganda and censorship to mold dissident groups into a conforming public amenable to the successful prosecution of the war.

Propagandizing by official and private agencies in the United States, to say nothing of the innumerable pressures exerted upon the public mind from without the country, was probably a necessary evil accompanying the war, but the vicious hatreds and prejudices engendered by that device made the task of contemporary historians, particularly those writing on the origins of the war while hostilities were in progress, doubly difficult. In the frenzied atmosphere of war, scholars were frequently caught up in the mass hysteria and made concrete observations without the advantage of essential perspectives. The publication of the secret documentary evidence bearing on the war's beginnings confronted them

with the need for revision of the wartime verdict of responsibility. The label of "revisionism" has been applied to the work of the historians who challenged the wartime interpretation of responsibility for World War I, but, in a broader sense, all historians are revisionists.

A study of the writings of American scholars on the question of the origins of the war logically must be divided into two broad phases. The first includes works written while the authors were subject to wartime pressures, propaganda and a marked shortage of substantial evidence and roughly spans the years 1914-1920. The second phase, the revisionist period beginning about 1920, followed the unprecedented openings of national archives after the war and witnessed an increasing acceptance in America and the world at large of the revisionist position on the origins of the war.

CHAPTER I

INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE, 1914-1920

Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles, signed June 28, 1919, reads as follows:

The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts, the responsibility of herself and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.

This is the famous or infamous "war guilt" clause upon which were based the Allied demands for reparations and which, by implication, sanctioned the entire treaty. It was generally assumed in the United States and in other Entente nations that Germany, by her acquiescence in such an indictment, admitted her guilt and ended for all time the debate over the responsibility for precipitating World War I. Nothing could have been further from the case. On the contrary, neither the German nation nor a great body of historians, variously called revisionists or debunkers, was ready to accept the signing as final proof of Germany's guilt.

In 1919, however, Germany had no choice except to subscribe to a verdict in which she had no faith. The German people as a whole were certain that they had not willed the war. German diplomats and statesmen, while recognizing certain omissions and blunders, likewise

were not conscious of having charted a course which aimed at war. The German signature on the Treaty of Versailles hence could only be involuntary--extorted at the point of a bayonet. It was inevitable that Germany from the first advocated a closer examination of the evidence, convinced that the verdict was open to modification.

American historians generally were ready to accept and defend the judgment of the Allies. Wartime emotions and the lack of evidence to the contrary made them susceptible to interpretations which in retrospect seem crude and infantile. It is necessary to examine the climate and bounds within which the historian moved.

By 1914, historical scholarship generally had attained a high degree of impartiality. Patriotic sentiments the world over had been subordinated to a desire to tell the truth. Then came the World War, and history was set back, in psychological temper, to the generation before Ranke. Historians of repute in all nations were guilty of succumbing to the popular ardor sweeping the world. It was in the United States, however, that the largest number of eminent scholars "broke loose from their intellectual moorings and outdid Bancroft in enthusiasm."¹

¹Harry E. Barnes, A History of Historical Writing (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938), p. 279.

That the student of history may become affected by biases arising from religion, race, nationality, partisan zeal or economic attachments is a generalization which might be applied to the historiography of any period but which is even more true during periods of international tension. After the decision of the United States government to enter the war in 1917, the American historian was more than ever apt to succumb to any or all of these pitfalls in his search for the truth. Furthermore, it goes without saying that even the most scholarly historian is likely to become group-conditioned, a fact which was illustrated graphically by the behavior of American historians and pseudo-historians during the war years. Many of these, who had shown remarkable poise in handling such controversial subjects as the American Revolution or the Civil War, showed now that they had not the courage to oppose public opinion and rode a crest of popularity by reiterating what was being said on street corners across the nation. In the frenzied atmosphere of American neutrality and particularly after the entry of the United States into the war, authors were caught up in the mass hysteria brought on by the dissemination of propaganda and made their interpretations without the advantage of an objective perspective.

History when you are in the midst of it is always nearly intolerable to the sensitive. It is only when a period is over and everything has been burned away that we can stand it. That is because we see the form and direction, and at the

same time, we do not know what it was like to live in it.²

At the outset, there can be little doubt that United States public opinion generally favored the Entente in the European war. If the press can be considered an accurate reflection of American consensus, and in this case, it probably can, the American people overwhelmingly favored the Allies. A nation-wide survey of editors in 1914 showed 367 pro-Ally and only 20 in favor of the Central Powers.³ In 1914, President Wilson's public utterances were models of neutrality, although he was privately "heart and soul for the Allies."⁴ His pleas for neutrality in both thought and deed were a difficult, if not an impossible, achievement to attain given the circumstances. While their sympathies were with the Allies, the vast majority of Americans nevertheless hoped that their country might remain aloof from the European conflict. As late as 1916, President Wilson received a mandate from the people to continue his policy which had "kept us out of war." The ardent wish for neutrality expressed widely in the United States stemmed probably from two sources,

²Harold Lavine and James Weschler, War Propaganda and the United States (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), p. ix.

³Harvey Wish, Contemporary America (New York: Harpers & Bros., 1955), p. 190.

⁴H.C. Peterson, Propaganda for War (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939), p. 190.

the traditional position in regard to European disputes and the official stand taken by the President.

One segment of American society, however, was vocal in its partiality toward the Entente powers--the academicians, whose number was relatively small but whose influence was great. Into this group, the intelligentsia, would fall the most influential of American historians. Probably representative of the historical profession in 1914 was Dr. Roscoe Thayer who replied to President Wilson's plea for neutrality in an extremely unneutral fashion:

Only a moral eunuch could be neutral in the sense implied by the malefic dictum of the President of the United States...I have noticed in this crisis that the men who boasted of being impartial were either pro-German, or they had no hearts to beat faster although the fate of mankind hung in the balance.⁵

That Thayer's sentiments represented those of the majority of the American historical profession is indicated by his election, despite the protests of Professors Ferdinand Schevill of Chicago and Henry A. Sill of Cornell, as president of the American Historical Association shortly before the declaration of war on Germany.

Besides pressures from within the country, the war-time historian had to contend with propaganda emanating from each of the opposing European camps. Although Ger-

⁵C. Hartley Grattan, "The Historian Cut Loose," The American Mercury, XI, No. 44 (August, 1927), 417.

many invested millions of dollars in a propaganda campaign to induce the United States to consider the attributes of remaining neutral, the British propaganda machine far overshadowed anything the Germans could muster. The English "war of words" was propaganda in the broadest sense of the word. News, money and political pressure each played a part in the battle which was fought not only in London, Washington and New York, but also in classrooms and pulpits throughout the United States. The campaign was so designed that American passions and emotions would become involved to an extent that neutrality would become a virtual impossibility.⁶

Toward attaining this objective, the Allies had a tremendous advantage over the Central Powers. Count von Bernstorff, German ambassador to the United States during the years of neutrality, once said that the Anglo-Saxon heritage and language barrier were two factors with which the German propagandists were never able to cope. In addition to these two very powerful advantages, the English were able to take advantage of the German example of how not to conduct their campaign. Realizing the immense value of the written and spoken word, the German government established its official propaganda headquarters in New York City. They committed nearly every possible blunder. They were far too open with their operations--too negligent of tact and finesse. In short, the Germans

⁶Peterson, p. 4.

were never able to gauge public opinion; they were always logical but never psychological,⁷ and their efforts backfired and ultimately seriously damaged their cause. What the Germans did not understand was that the effectiveness of propaganda depends upon the expert manipulation of genuine sympathies, not on bribery. More than anything else, their campaign was compromised from the outset since there were few sympathies with which they could work save those of the Irish and German-Americans.

Serving as an additional obstacle with which the German propagandists had to grapple before they could hope to attain any degree of success was the fact that prior to the war, few American newspapers had had correspondents in Europe. As a result, Americans were forced to rely almost exclusively upon British journalists for their news of Europe, and that news was unavoidably colored by the British attitude. The more Anglicized the news the historian read, the more certain appeared the veracity of the incomplete documents on hand. The German activity in Belgium, as reported by the Anglo-American press, seemed to bear out the most insidious of the Entente charges.

As if the American people were not already getting more than enough of the British point of view in their daily news diet, the Royal Navy, on August 5, 1914, cut

⁷George Viereck, Spreading Germs of Hate (New York: H. Liveright & Co., 1930), p. 116.

the cable between the United States and Germany. Now, with the perfection of the wireless still a matter of months in the future, American newspapers were completely dependent upon English newsgatherers, and the American historian did not get even his occasional dispatch out of Germany to temper the pro-Entente news releases. The cutting of the cable came at a time when public opinion in the United States was crystallizing, and the Germans were never able to catch up. When normal communications between this country and Germany were restored, it did little to affect public opinion. "The first publication is that which is formative of public opinion and affects public emotion."⁸

The efforts of the few correspondents who were in Europe representing American newspapers proved to be of little avail in trying to present "the other side of the story" since most of their copy passed through the British mail censors. Associated Press correspondent Schreiner estimated that three-fourths of the dispatches written by American newspaper and magazine correspondents were "perishing under the shears of English censors."⁹

The above represented only the negative steps taken by the British government pursuant to the first

⁸Peterson, p. 46.

⁹Walter Millis, The Road to War, America, 1914-1917 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1935), p. 147.

positive step in September, 1914. In that month, the War Propaganda Bureau was established in a London edifice known as Wellington House, the name by which the organization has since been popularly known. Sir Gilbert Parker was placed in charge of the subdivision directing propaganda in the United States, and he proceeded to take up where Shakespeare, Chaucer and Byron had left off. Wellington House, which existed concurrently with numerous other quasi-official and independent propaganda agencies, busily engaged itself in the dissemination of literature in the United States. Ironically enough, many of the publications which received wide circulation in America at the behest of the British propaganda machine were the very ones which the American Historical Review recommended to its subscribers as being of such "character as to deserve the student's attention."¹⁰

Allied propagandists fashioned their appeal to all classes, but of prime importance were the intellectuals. With this respected segment of the populace adhering to the Allied cause, the British hoped others would follow. In the final analysis, the English plans called for American recruits to do the actual field work in the United States, and it was for this reason that the

¹⁰American Historical Review, XX, No. 2 (January, 1915), 452. This comment was made in reference to a list of early publications purporting to relate the origins of the war including Why We Are at War by members of the Oxford faculty of modern history. See below.

historian, journalist and politician was each subjected to an extra measure of British pressure. Although the written word was a powerful weapon in the British campaign to sew the American literati firmly to the Allied camp, it was not the only device resorted to by the masters of propaganda. Both the English and French entertained American men of influence regally in their respective countries, the British soon outstripping their continental cohorts. American newspapermen and interpreters of the European scene were wined and dined in the best of English tradition.

Most United States citizens invited abroad by Wellington House were admittedly lukewarm supporters of the Entente when they left New York City. When they returned from their all-expense paid sojourns, during which they were treated to "proof" of German atrocities in the form of Allied-guided tours of the Belgian battlegrounds, they were violently pro-Entente. By the end of 1915, all but a small portion of the nation's men of letters had been successfully recruited to the Allied camp. Strangely enough, many of these very men had earlier recognized Allied propaganda for what it was-- a force to be reckoned with--and repeatedly announced that they would not be swayed by the English and French efforts. It may be coincidental, but those who initially had borne the brunt of the Allied propagandizing efforts were those who first fell victim to the psychological

trap.¹¹

How the British obtained the names of prominent Americans at whom their propaganda might be most profitably directed would make an interesting study in itself. After his appointment as director of the American branch of Wellington House, Sir Gilbert Parker proceeded to carefully analyse American public opinion through newspapers and periodicals. On the basis of his study and through a discriminate use of Who's Who, Parker was able to compile a mailing list.¹² It was these men who, knowingly or not, kept the British informed as to the course of American public opinion so that they were always aware just how far their government might go in violation of American neutral rights before invoking the wrath of the people. Clearly, this was a facet of propaganda to which German psychologists had given little thought.

Some of the best ammunition for Wellington House came from the pens of American writers. There is, however, little evidence to support a charge of widespread collusion between American authors and British propagandists. A more suitable explanation for the similarity between the wartime writing in the United States and the official line of Wellington House is the American

¹¹C. Hartley Grattan, Why We Fought (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1929), p. 62.

¹²David Lloyd George, War Memoirs of David Lloyd George (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1933), II, 113.

cultural heritage which compelled writers in this country to emulate their British colleagues. The two exceptions where the British actually underwrote the expenses incurred in the dissemination of works by Americans were James M. Beck's The Evidence in the Case and The American Verdict on the War by Samuel H. Church.¹³ While these were the only two examples of open Anglo-American literary cooperation, there can be little doubt that Parker and company welcomed the prolific output by a whole "school" of American historians and would-be historians who insisted on delving into the causes of the war before adequate documentary evidence was available to tell the whole story. It might be mentioned that the American Historical Review cited Beck's book as one of the better secondary sources on the background of the war and condoned the 1915 position of the ex-United States Attorney General with the comment, "Enough documentary evidence is available to make a judgment permissible, even to the historian."¹⁴

The immediate purpose of the intensive British propaganda campaign was to create an atmosphere compatible with the allocation of United States economic

¹³James D. Squires, British Propaganda at Home and in the United States, 1914-1918 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), p. 16.

¹⁴American Historical Review, XX, No. 3 (April, 1915), 694-95.

aid. The ultimate objective, of course, was that the economic aid would be followed by men and machines of war. To accomplish both the short and long run objectives, it was mandatory that an ordinary power conflict appear as a life and death struggle between good and evil. Beyond this, the Allied "mission" must be made to appear synonymous to that of the United States. Since the interests of Great Britain and America--the salvation of the world for democracy--were ostensibly identical, was it not natural that they should be members of the same team at Armageddon? To those who subscribed to the English "mission" line, the presence of Russia, the most autocratic of all European nations, on the team must have led to no end of uneasiness. Still, Russia was a Christian nation, and to the near-sighted individuals propounding the "Holy War" myth, her adherence to the Entente could be reconciled.

By culling from the writings of the "Prussian School" of historians, notably Treitschke and Droysen, Allied propagandists, supplemented by the works of American historians, were able to convince the American masses that Germany perpetrated the war in the interest of Prussian autocracy and was prosecuting it with a calculated brutality. The speech differences between the United States and Germany and the clannishness of German-Americans were played to the hilt in an effort to convince the American public that the German nation

inherently stood against everything held dear by citizens of the free world.

The "Holy War" or "crusade to save the world for democracy" line was particularly appealing to Protestant ministers of the Gospel, and they proved to be an excellent media through which the seeds of racism were sown among the masses. President Wilson also proved highly susceptible to the "righteous" cause preached by the progenitors of the holy war line.¹⁶ The propagandist, be he British or an unwitting tool of the British in the guise of an American scholar, aimed directly at emotion since, in the final analysis, emotion is the common denominator of all propaganda.¹⁷

Always opportunistic, the British propaganda machine directed its efforts along two additional lines. By effective use of the legalistic appeal, always attractive in the United States, many Americans were convinced that since Germany had broken the law when she invaded neutral Belgium, she must be punished, and it was the place of the United States as one of the guardians of international law to participate in the administration of justice. Another objective for which the British propagandists strove in the early months of the war was the creation of an atmosphere of confidence regarding

¹⁶Alex M. Arnett, Claude Kitchen and the Wilson War Policies (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1927), p. 121.

¹⁷Squires, p. 38.

an eventual Allied victory. Such a belief was basic to the success of the overall British plan since it was unlikely that the United States would invest either economically or militarily in a losing cause.

By all odds, the most notable achievement of the early efforts of Wellington House in the United States was the general acceptance of the myth of sole German war guilt. Despite the fact that the fable was exploded by serious historians in the 1920's, American education has been seriously blighted by the earlier interpretation until the present day. It was not only the American public that fell victim to the British assertion but also the great majority of American historians. The British cry of guilty was echoed by Americans in all walks of life until the verdict was accepted as fact. There was little the Germans could offer in rebuttal.

To the host of American historians writing in 1914, the Sarajevo incident came like a deluge. "Bang! went Princip's pistol...and bang! went all the professors." By the end of July, the historians were firing. By the end of August, they were in "violent eruption."¹⁸ The few American historians who kept their intellectual equilibrium such as Professors Sill of Cornell, Schevill and Thompson of Chicago, and Sheperd of Columbia were denounced as "intellectual traitors."¹⁹

¹⁸Grattan, The American Mercury, XI, No. 44, 415.

¹⁹Barnes, A History of..., p. 279.

Beginning with German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg's unfortunate slip of the tongue in referring to the treaty guaranteeing Belgian territorial integrity as a "scrap of paper" and continuing throughout the war, German actions, as portrayed by historians and journalists alike, seemed to bear out the guilty indictment. As George Viereck so aptly put it, "World War I began with a 'scrap of paper' and ended with a million scraps of paper."²⁰

It is impossible in a paper dealing primarily with historical interpretation to examine minutely the expert techniques employed by British propagandists to seduce the American public into the Entente camp. Suffice to say that the British used all of the propaganda gimicks then known to man and added a few of their own such as the fabrication of pictorial evidence.

President Wilson, like his countrymen, was influenced by the atrocity stories out of Belgium. This was particularly true after the circulation of the famous Bryce Report.²¹ Of all living Englishmen, Viscount James Bryce, the de Tocqueville of the twentieth century, was perhaps the most trusted by the President and the academicians. When Bryce sponsored the fabrications,

²⁰Viereck, p. 22.

²¹Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages Appointed by His Majesty's Government and Presided over by Lord Bryce (Cd. 7894-95) London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1915.

there could be little doubt in the veracity of the charges against the Germans, and the Report was received as gospel in 1915.²²

While excesses such as those listed in the Bryce Report undoubtedly existed in varying degrees, "every scrap of evidence serves to exonerate the German army of the charges."²³ Indeed, the record of the German soldiers in Belgium was amazingly clean. On September 3, 1914, five American newspapermen who accompanied the invading German armies in Belgium dispatched the following message to the Associated Press:

In spirit [of] fairness we unite in declaring German atrocities groundless as far as we were able to observe...unable to report single instance unprovoked reprisal...Discipline German soldiers excellent. No drunkenness...To truth these statements we pledge professional personal word.²⁴

By the time of the Sussex incident in 1916, the American public, for the most part, was convinced that all that had been said about the "Huns" was true, and a veritable war hysteria swept the nation. With the "rape" of Belgium, Allied propagandists had begun a hate campaign, and the harvest of their efforts was now about to be reaped. If it did not prove the pen was mightier than the sword, it at least showed it could be a powerful supplement to it.

²²Willard Waller (ed.), War in the Twentieth Century (New York: Random House, 1940), p. 39.

²³Lavine and Weschler, p. 27.

²⁴Ibid., p. 27.

Besides being subjected to a general feeling of hostility toward the Central Powers and innumerable psychological pressures exerted from without the nation which he might consciously or unconsciously allow to color his narrative, the American historian exploring the war guilt problem faced yet another obstacle in his quest for the truth--a decided paucity of reliable information. To what could the scholar, particularly the far-removed American historian of 1914-1920, look if he wished to assess the relative responsibility for precipitating the war. He could investigate the diplomatic dispatches and conventions to which the various European states were signatory after the Franco-Prussian War. What the American historian did not know in 1914, however, was that the "open covenant" with which President Wilson was later so preoccupied had not been held in particularly high esteem by any of the European powers after 1871. If the American historian had had all available documentary evidence at his fingertips, which, incidentally, few of them did, he could still do no better than approximate the truth. If he wished to ply his trade objectively in searching for the causes of the war, he would have to refrain from interpreting the evidence until it was all in.

Shortly after the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, the American Historical Review quite properly warned its subscribers to beware of any publication purporting to relate the history of the war's origins before it was

humanly possible to do so. The position of the journal would have been defensible had it stopped there, but it did not. In succeeding issues, the Review recommended certain collections of documents and secondary sources which, because of their character or the standing of their authors, deserved the scholar's attention. That the standing of an author has very little to do with the veracity of a particular work written expressly for the purpose of substantiating the righteousness of his nation's actions before the public of the world's largest neutral can hardly be debated. Witness Why We Are at War²⁵ or the work of Lord Bryce.

As for the collections of government documents, the Historical Review recommended the British Blue Book,²⁶ the first of the so-called colored books, in which was published only what the British government felt was fit for neutral and domestic consumption. If what the American Historical Review recommended to its subscribers can be taken as an index of what American historians were subjected to as reliable sources in the early war years, it is small wonder that few German apologists could be found among American scholars before 1920. The truth was that the British Blue Book, no more

²⁵Members of the Oxford faculty of Modern History. Why We Are at War. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914. See below.

²⁶Great Britain and the European Crisis, Correspondence, and Statements in Parliament, together with an Introductory Narrative of Events. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1914.

than the early official statements of the other belligerents, offered much in the way of concrete evidence. It was somewhat less than complete and carefully edited. Only in the third decade of this century, after revolutions had shaken several of the erstwhile belligerent governments, were the archives opened to historians. It was then evident how much had been omitted in the early official papers. If any account of the origins of the war written before 1919 at the very earliest had even a close approximation to the truth, it was only because of the superior guessing power of the historian, not because he held superior documentary evidence.

It might be contended that undue attention has been accorded Allied propaganda in a study devoted primarily to historical interpretation. The charge that propaganda has not been given the place it deserves in allocating the reasons which prompted American action in 1917, however, is probably valid. If it can be assumed that Allied propaganda played a part in the ultimate American decision to go to war, it is equally certain that the psychological weapons utilized by England in her war of words exercised a profound influence upon American historians then publishing. The bare fact is that British propaganda showed the way, and many American historians of the period 1914-1920 obediently followed.

What emanated from the typewriters of American

scholars during the war years bearing on the origins of the war, particularly after 1917 when writers were subjected to pressures of George Creel's Committee of Public Information, could as well have been spoken or written in England or France. Despite the President's plea for neutrality, the literati little more than echoed the extremely unneutral sentiments of British and French scholars. This is justification enough for a discussion of British propaganda techniques and their effect in a study devoted to the investigation and comparison of two phases of American historical writing. The literary output of the period 1914-1920, historically speaking, overwhelmingly favored the Entente. This can be explained in part by the scarcity of reliable information, but it does not excuse the vindictiveness and malice with which most American historians writing on the origins of the war approached the problem of responsibility.

After the United States entry, that vindictiveness became even more apparent than it had theretofore been. With the declaration of war came the need for mobilization both militarily and intellectually. In 1917, the American historical profession submitted itself almost unanimously to the "high" uses of the Creel Committee. Leadership in preparing the invective against Germany came from professional historians Thayer, Chevalier Hazen, William S. Davis, Munroe Smith, A. Bushnell Hart and

Bernadotte E. Schmitt, all of whose services were enlisted by the National Security League, a propagandistic subsidiary of the CPI. In addition, a list of occasional contributors to the "Red, White and Blue" series would include such illustrious scholars as: Beard, Barnes, Becker, Corwin, Fay and West. Their contribution to the war effort was "one of the most stupendous jobs of popular scholarship that this country has ever seen."²⁷

Unsatisfied with the already heavily biased output by the historians, George Creel and James T. Shotwell, professor of history at Columbia University, collectively conceived a National Board for History Service to line up historians for the Allied cause.²⁸ Conformity of thought was to be the by-word; when Professors John W. Burgess and William M. Sloane pleaded for consideration of the German case, they were labeled suspect by their colleagues.

For their meritorious service on behalf of the Entente, American historians were rewarded handsomely. Hazen was delegated by Creel to edit German sources upon which the wartime historians leaned heavily to substantiate their theses. The standard American high school text on European history was Hazen's, and the ideas he propounded there were later expanded and embodied

²⁷James Robert Mock and Cedric Larson, Words that Won the War (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939), p. 159.

²⁸Barnes, A History of..., p. 280.

in his Fifty Years of Europe. In the years following the peace, Hazen served as an exchange professor to the University of Strasbourg where, to his chagrin, he found the Alsacians less contented under the French than they had been under the Germans.²⁹ Besides the material rewards heaped upon the "kept" historians, acclamation came in other forms. For nearly a decade after the war, the presidents of the American Historical Association were selected from those who had most advanced the Entente cause during the war.³⁰

When the historian takes it upon himself to search for the causes of an event as cataclysmic as the World War, he accepts a moral responsibility to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It cannot be denied that the earlier war guilt scholars were hampered from the beginning by the fact that the documents necessary to assess properly the relative responsibility for causing the war remained hidden in the archives of the belligerent powers. But this factor does not detract from the contention that those writers who delved into the causes of the war before it was possible to approximate the truth failed in a grave responsibility to their own and succeeding generations.

If there is any substance in the assertion that the

²⁹Grattan, The American Mercury, XI, No. 44, 415.

³⁰Barnes, A History of..., p. 280.

United States might have averted involvement in World War I, and it is the opinion of many students of the subject that there is, American historians, as interpreters of the events leading to the war, must shoulder at least a part of the responsibility for the United States entry. One of the most important reasons for American implication in "Europe's War" was the state of mind in the United States--a product of British propaganda in the first instance and later of American historical interpretation.

In general, historical activity in the United States during the war was characterized by a high degree of jingoism and patriotic slanting of effort, intellectual cooperation with the war effort and the readjustment of traditional American historical views which placed the allies of the United States in an unfavorable light.³¹

³¹Mathew A. Fitzsimons, Alfred G. Pandt and Charles E. Novell (eds.), The Development of Historiography (Harrisburg: The Stackpole Co., 1954), p. 420.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGINS OF WORLD WAR I AS VIEWED BY AMERICAN HISTORIANS, 1914-1920

I

The ensuing chapter is devoted to a discussion of American war guilt scholars writing in the period ranging roughly from 1914 through 1920 and to the interpretations they assigned the events leading to the outbreak of hostilities in 1914. While each of the writers considered approached the problem from a slightly different angle, enough homogeneity exists among them that they may be distinguished from their colleagues publishing after 1920 who were concerned with the same problem. Before examining the specific works of early American students of responsibility, however, a brief survey of the type of source material then available is in order.

During the war and in the years immediately thereafter, the discussion of responsibility rested largely on national prejudices and intuition. Beyond this, those who discussed the origins of the war relied on the incomplete collections of government documents, the "colored books." Of these, the British Blue Book was the most complete, but even that apology left a good deal unsaid that might have reflected unfavorably on the British actions

of 1914. The incomplete and unofficial German apology,¹ primarily intended for a German audience, was designed to convince the people that the war was forced upon the Central Powers by Russia. It was a convincing statement of the German position and had the desired affect within the country. Never intended as a complete exposition of the German case, however, the obvious gaps in the German statement conveyed the worst possible impression outside Germany.

The English and German apologies of 1914 were followed in rapid order by statements from Russia, Belgium, Serbia, France and Austria. None of the 1914 apologies, subsequent research was to prove, were complete; all were to a greater or lesser extent misleading. Because of the scarcity of documentary evidence from which the whole story of the war's origins might be gleaned, American scholars investigating responsibility accepted some primary and secondary sources as fact without the advantage of comparisons by which the reliability of such sources might be checked.

Besides the "colored books," one of the principal sources of information on which American students of the background of the war relied were "eye-witness" accounts of the European scene which purported to relate the pro-

¹German White Book. Aktenstücke zum Kriegsausbruch. Dem deutschen Reichstag vorgelegt am 4. 8. '14. Mit nachträglichen Ergänzungen. Berlin: Liebheit, 1914.

gression toward war as it occurred. At the same time publications like Why We Are at War, written by the six Oxford scholars, were utilized by American writers almost as primary source material. The value of a publication such as the one written by the learned professors, according to the American Historical Review, lay in the "character and standing" of its authors. An examination of the contents of the volume published in 1914 will quickly invalidate the contention that the thesis of the book was in any way affected by the "character" of its authors. Having received the blessing of the American Historical Review,² it is probably safe to assume the book was widely read by American historians. Its importance for purposes of this study lies principally in the fact that the interpretation presented by the Oxford historians was widely reiterated by American scholars publishing in the ensuing years.

The authors chose the Franco-Prussian War as a starting point from which to examine the events leading to World War I. A knowledge of the remote causes of the war, the Oxford professors contended, was essential before the immediate causes could be viewed in their proper perspective and before the student of history could hope to understand why Austria-Hungary and Germany "threw down the glove" to France and Russia and why England intervened

²American Historical Review, XX, No. 2 (January, 1915), 452.

not only as the "protector" of neutral Belgium but as a friend of France.³

Throughout the period which gave birth to the rival alliance systems on the European continent, England was portrayed as innocence personified, yielding at every turn in an effort to placate the adolescent German nation, which suffered from a bad case of growing pains. The Triple Alliance was the grand cause of the war because it inspired over-confidence in Germany and the Dual Monarchy leading them to press their claims both east and west with an intolerable disregard for the law of nations.

France, the authors conceded, started the continental armaments race with the Boulager Law of 1886 whereby the French peacetime army was raised to 500,000 men, but Germany soon outstripped her western neighbor, and the Franco-Russian alliance was the only alternative for France which faced a nation whose peacetime strength stood at 5,400,000 in 1914.⁴ Although the armament contest sounded the alarm well in advance of 1914, the carte blanche Germany presented Austria was evidence enough that the "startling" events of 1914 had been planned well in advance of the assassination of the Austrian heir apparent.

The war in which England was then engaged, the invective continued, was fundamentally a war between two different

³Members of the Oxford faculty of Modern History, Why We Are at War (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), p. 29.

⁴Ibid., pp. 40-42

principles, raison d'état and the rule of law. "One regards international covenants as 'scraps of paper,' while the other regards the maintenance of such covenants as a grave and inevitable obligation."⁵ England stood for the idea of a public law of Europe and for the small nations which it protected. "Our interest is in Right. We are fighting for Right, because Right is our supreme interest."⁶ Nothing short of the German attack on Belgium could have drawn England in on the French side. The average Englishman in 1914 could not believe that German statesmanship had degenerated to piracy; the proof was not long in coming and the ultimatum was dispatched to Germany.

England, according to the authors, took the only course compatible with honor. The Triple Entente was fulfilling a mission--the destruction of military anarchy. Russia, who had been forced to accept humiliation at the hands of the Dual Monarchy in the Bosnian crisis of 1908, had no choice in keeping with her traditional position as protector of the Balkan Slavs but to accept the challenge offered by Austria. Since the new Russian constitution was "Anglophile," the Oxford scholars felt Russia's natural place in the alliance system was with England and France in the pursuance of the common cause of international arbitration and disarmament. "Duty and interest compel the Allies

⁵Members of the Oxford faculty, p. 108.

⁶Ibid., p. 117.

in the same direction."⁷

Looking at the work of the Oxford historians from a 1958 perspective, the student finds the legalistic and moral themes central to the book. The Allies were portrayed as the defenders of international law, the principle of arbitration, of "Right" in general, while the real issues, the national interests of the European states, despite lip-service paid to the remote causes of the war, were largely ignored. Why We Are at War is only one of many examples that could be cited as representative of the early interpretation relative to the outbreak of World War I. The reason for its selection is that it was one of the first to expound a thesis which became increasingly popular in America with changes in emphasis but nearly always with identical conclusions.

My Four Years in Germany, written by former ambassador to Germany James W. Gerard, was one of many "eye-witness" accounts by Americans speculating on the causes of the war. As a reminiscence, this work has no place in the bibliography for this study, but the number of American historians who referred to Gerard's book indicates a certain faith in the integrity of the author and should justify an examination of its contents, if for no other reason than that it was typical of the type of source on which American students of the war's origins leaned heavily. As stated in his preface, Gerard's purpose in writing the memoirs

⁷Members of the Oxford faculty, p. 56.

of his term as United States envoy to Berlin was to implant a realization in the American mind that "we are engaged in a war with the greatest military power the world has ever seen." The implication, of course, is one of pure propaganda, but that did not prevent many American war guilt scholars from using Gerard's unfounded conclusions to substantiate their theses.

The defects in the Gerard volume from the point of view of the scientific historian are immediately apparent. He took the peculiarities of isolated Germans with whom he came into contact and applied them indiscriminately to the entire German nation. His penchant toward generalization would appear to be enough to make the sincere scholar hesitate in accepting his findings as fact. Nevertheless, Gerard's conclusions were widely cited as creditable evidence by early American students of war responsibility.

It was not the German leaders alone with whom the Allies had to contend but the entire German nation. The United States, Gerard maintained, joined in a "crusade" against a nation whose poets, professors and parsons united in stirring its people to a "white pitch of hatred first against Russia and England and later against the United States."⁸

Probing the collective German mind, Gerard found that the Germans psychologically were a simple people whose

⁸James W. Gerard, My Four Years in Germany (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1917), p. x.

dominant characteristic was an extreme naivete¹ conducive to the acceptance of a racialist line of propaganda. A "hereditary instinct," passed on from the Teutonic Knights, caused the Germans, fearful of their neighbors, to become tools of a noble class which believed in war for its own bitter sake. Moreover, many of the German doctors with whom the author associated felt that the "heavy eating and large consumption of wine and beer had an unfavorable affect on the German national character and readied them for war."⁹

According to the ex-ambassador, there were countless facts that pointed to the summer of 1914 as the logical time for the start of a German-inspired European war. By the time William II left for his Norwegian cruise July 6, 1914, a definite line of action had been conceived after the ruling caste recognized the advantages afforded Germany by the opening of the Kiel Canal, the possession of the Zeppelin and the perfection of the submarine.¹⁰

The event which finally persuaded the Kaiser and the ruling oligarchy to resort to war was the attitude of the people in the Zabern Affair and the fear of a growing dislike of militarism. The event in Alsace prompted the decision by the Junkers that a speedy bloodletting was necessary to placate popular discontent which, Gerard

⁹Gerard, p. 57.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 97-98.

wrote, manifested itself in the Reichstag through the Social Democratic opposition. In other words, Gerard viewed the war simply as a "safety valve" by which the German nation, torn asunder by an increasingly strong opposition to the ruling classes, might again achieve unity of purpose under the guiding hand of the military. The most charitable thing to be said of such a view is that it was short-sighted.

To the student of history today, Gerard's characterization of the German nation appears a feeble, amateurish attempt at mass psycho-analysis aimed simply at inciting popular indignation in the United States quite in keeping with the activities of George Creel and company. Bernadotte E. Schmitt, however, lauded the book as "definitive and authentic" and commended the author for his several contributions to the claim that Germany had prepared for the war well in advance of 1914.¹¹

Perhaps as damning as any single piece of evidence substantiating the oft-heard claim of sole German war guilt was the 1918 contribution to the international controversy by Henry M. Morgenthau, former American ambassador to Turkey. The author's purpose in writing was to furnish the American people with further evidence that the crime of 1914 was not just manslaughter but, in fact, murder in the first degree. "I do not want to

¹¹Bernadotte E. Schmitt, Review of My Four Years in Germany, by James W. Gerard, American Historical Review, XXIII, No. 3 (April, 1917), 399.

be an accessory after the fact by having proof of this crime and not making it public."¹² Morgenthau, however, neglected to clarify why he remained an "accessory" for more than three years.

After an over-simplified analysis of the events in the Balkans between 1913 and 1917, the years he represented the United States in Constantinople, Morgenthau expressed his belief in five basic factors concerning the German state: (1) Germany had a plan of world conquest; (2) the existence in Europe of a self-perpetuating group of monarchs centered in Germany was a menace to democracy; (3) The co-existence of autocracy and democracy could never be more than an armed truce; (4) The Allies had the physical forces and "internal strength of justice" to crush the autocracies; and (5) The enemy, autocracy, was sustained by the German army. Until it was destroyed, autocracy would continue its aggression.¹³ The above were not "facts" which required a particularly keen insight. They were being repeated daily on street corners across the nation after the entry of the United States in the European war. The self-styled interpreter of the German scene could have easily gleaned his observations from the works of almost any of the authors whose works on war

¹²Burton J. Hendrick, "Ambassador Morgenthau's Story," World's Work, XXXV, No. 5 (April, 1918), 120. Morgenthau's revelations initially appeared serially in the New York World in October, 1917.

¹³Ibid., pp. 121-22.

guilt had been published before 1918.

Besides the "evidence" Morgenthau purported to uncover through his analysis of German activities in Turkey, the ex-diplomat rose to the occasion and so distorted an event concerning the origins of the war that two generations of historians have been unable to completely expunge from the record the effects of the exaggeration. According to Morgenthau, a Crown Council was convened July 5, 1914, at Potsdam to which nearly all German ambassadors, members of the general staff, naval commanders, bankers, the captains of German industry and Austrian dignitaries were summoned. The sleuthing American ambassador's suspicions were aroused a few days after the Sarajevo incident when the German ambassador to Turkey, von Wangenheim, failed to appear at a requiem mass in honor of the late Austrian Archduke and duchess. The explanation for his conspicuous absence was freely offered by the boastful German ambassador a few days later. His presence had been required at the "epoch making" imperial conference.¹⁴

To each of those present at the meeting, the Kaiser purportedly put the following question: "Are you ready for war?" In each instance, the answer was in the affirmative, except in the case of the financiers who needed about two weeks to sell foreign securities and float loans. The conference decided to do nothing to arouse suspicion in

¹⁴Henry M. Morgenthau, "Ambassador Morgenthau's Story," World's Work, XXXVI, No. 1 (May, 1918), 72-73.

order that the bankers might have the time needed to re-adjust their finances for the coming war.¹⁵ This was offered as an explanation for the alleged increased activity on the world's stock exchanges.

Morgenthau concluded his series of articles with the statement that the "colored books" flooding Europe made little impression on him. "I do not have to study fragmentary evidence. I know." As von Wangenheim had proudly admitted, the conspiracy that caused the Great War was "hatched by the Kaiser and his imperial crew at the Potsdam Conference July 5, 1914."¹⁶

Here was conclusive proof of the "blank check" theory as well as nearly every other charge which had been hurled at the German nation since 1914, and the American historian and layman alike received Morgenthau's testimony with receptive ears. An indication of how Morgenthau's revelations were sensationalized by the American press can be seen by looking at any one of a number of periodical articles. The Literary Digest commented editorially, "If there is any question in your mind as to who precipitated the greatest of all human tragedies, see the enlightened facts as revealed...by Henry M. Morgenthau."¹⁷

¹⁵Morgenthau, World's Work, XXXVI, No. 2 (June, 1918), 170.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 171.

¹⁷"How von Wangenheim Proudly Spilled the Beans," Literary Digest, LVII (June 15, 1918), 50.

At this point, it is proper to note that subsequent investigation proved that a series of conferences were called by William II July 5 and 6, but that discussion did not concern a general European war which both Germany and Austria hoped to avert. Morgenthau, when later faced with the facts, conceded that there was no Crown Council where the decision was made to wage war, but, he insisted, those who conferred with the Emperor on July 5 were the ones who would have been present had such a war council taken place.¹⁸

The Disclosures from Germany, published under the auspices of the American Association for International Conciliation, comprised but a small part of the patriotic editorial work done by American historians during the war. The Disclosures purported to be confessions by Germans who were supposedly in a position to know whereof they spoke and who openly admitted German war guilt. The first of the "confessions," "The Lichnowsky Memorandum," was a statement by Prince Lichnowsky, pre-war German ambassador to England, admitting before the world Germany's guilt in precipitating the war. According to Lichnowsky, the retirement of Bismark led to the German decision to press her search for colonies in the Balkans and the Near East. To realize her ambitions in both areas, it would be necessary to put the force of the German Empire behind the

¹⁸George Viereck, Spreading Germs of Hate (New York: H. Liveright & Co., 1930), p. 210.

wedge Austria was driving into the Balkans and to acquire a dominant influence in Constantinople. That this inevitably meant war with Russia was fully realized, but such a war was not feared.¹⁹ Up to this point, the ex-ambassador had added little to the story of German intrigue related by Morgenthau and others.

The chief value of the Lichnowsky papers to the historian was the German ambassador's rejection of the stand taken by wartime German apologists, namely the "encirclement theory," which held that the Franco-Russian alliance was aimed at choking Germany economically on two sides. Germany was not isolated by the wiles of her neighbors, Lichnowsky asserted, but by her own conduct.²⁰ For the view held by some Germans that Serbia had inflicted upon Austria's honor a stain that could only be wiped out by blood, Lichnowsky substituted the charge that the extermination of Serbia was mandatory because she stood in the way of Austro-German ambitions. The theory which held Russian mobilization tantamount to an act of war was dismissed by the former German diplomat on the ground that it was purely a military notion which had never stood up in the diplomatic world.²¹

Lest Lichnowsky's repudiations appear overly con-

¹⁹Munroe Smith (ed.), "The Lichnowsky Memorandum," The Disclosures from Germany (New York: American Association for International Conciliation, 1918), p. 7.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 10-12.

²¹Ibid., p. 15.

clusive, cognizance must be taken by the student of the ambassador's position at the time of the outbreak of hostilities. The reason he gave for his initial assignment in London was his adherence to antiquated Bismarkian theories in which colonies played an insignificant role. Lichnowsky claimed ignorance of the Pan-German movement. By his logic then, it was only natural that his government assign to England a man who was unaware of the plan to create German "hegemony" in Europe by means of a war "long on the drawing boards." How Lichnowsky's ignorance of so-called Pan-German schemes was reconciled with his revelations bearing on alleged German aims in the Balkans is an obvious contradiction upon which the editor of the "confessions" failed to elucidate. Furthermore, the student must bear in mind that Lichnowsky had been repudiated by his own government. Under these circumstances, his testimony might well have been dismissed by the serious historian. Perhaps the reason for Lichnowsky's ignorance of German plans for aggression was that there had been no plans on the drawing boards of which he spoke.

Few reservations were held by historians then publishing. Lichnowsky's testimony was used as evidence to substantiate all that had theretofore been written about Germany. They concurred unanimously with the Lichnowsky assertion that "it is not surprising the whole civilized world outside Germany attributes to us the sole guilt for war."²² The problem, of course, was that of accepting as

²²Smith, pp. 244-45.

fact the testimony of one Anglophile ambassador who had been denounced by his government and was, in fact, guilty of treason and using it as a basis for condemning his superiors.

Lichnowsky's revelations were corroborated by a Dr. Meuhlon in letters also published at the behest of the American Association for International Conciliation and edited by Professor Munroe Smith.²³ Dr. Meuhlon, a pre-war member of the Krupp board of directors, was, according to the editor, one of the relatively few Germans who knew from the outset that the Central Powers had forced an unnecessary and unjustifiable war on Europe. Unwilling to further German military activity, the munitions maker took the only course compatible with his alleged pacific views and exiled himself to Switzerland. His confessions gave further substance to charges previously made and confirmed to the satisfaction of most American war guilt scholars the inference that full agreement on the course to be taken had been reached between Berlin and Vienna.

According to Meuhlon, the outcome of the Kaiser's "Moroccan adventure" had left him in a war-like frame of mind. The failure of diplomacy at Algeciras and Agadir had convinced him that in the next crisis he would "un-sheath the sword."²⁴ Meuhlon attested also that the

²³Smith was a professor of international law at Amherst College.

²⁴Munroe Smith (ed.), "Memoranda and Letters of Dr. Meuhlon," The Disclosures from Germany (New York: American Association for International Conciliation, 1918), p. 186.

Kaiser went on his Norwegian cruise July 6 for appearances only. The evidence to substantiate such a charge was admittedly hearsay, but, Professor Smith maintained summarizing accurately the attitude of most American students of the war guilt problem, the historian could not exclude all evidence that was barred by English judicial procedure. The value of hearsay evidence depended upon the position and character of the immediate witnesses, which, in this case, were allegedly good. Moreover, hearsay evidence was "creditably enhanced when the testimony fit in with the established facts."²⁵ The logic by which such a conclusion was deduced is certainly open to question. Who was it that established the "facts" of which Smith wrote? The answer is persons of the same stamp as those who provided the corroborating evidence.

Meuhlon refuted the charge heard in some German quarters that the Belgian government had arranged to cooperate with Great Britain in an aggressive war against Germany. According to the munition tycoon's statement, the assertion was absurd because Belgium had made herself dependent upon the Krupp Works in Germany for military supplies. Proof that Belgium had erred in placing her trust was evident when the German refusal to deliver arms already paid for was considered.²⁶

The "evidence" cited above is merely illustrative

²⁵Smith, p. 187.

²⁶Ibid., p. 188.

of the type of sources which early American war guilt scholars used to bolster the verdict arrived at after scrutiny of the incomplete "colored books." There are obvious defects in accepting any of the testimony as fact upon which to convict the German nation, but American writers were wont to accept any statement that might somehow fit or be made to fit into their general scheme of things.

The early students of war responsibility, those publishing between 1914 and 1920, reverted from conventional historical methodology whereby a thesis is established empirically from an examination of all the facts. Most of the American writers concerned with the beginnings of the war had formulated their theses long before deciding to write, and from their preconceived notions, they often arrived at the facts deductively, discarding any information that might not square with their original hypothesis--that Germany was solely guilty.

II

One of the most popular central themes around which the earlier American students of war responsibility built their theses was that of the "war to save the world for democracy." That writers of this type were but little concerned with intellectual honesty or historical fact is evident; that their work complied with the literary requirements of the Committee of Public Information is

equally evident. One of the most scurrilous examples of this type of "history" was Why We Went to War by Christian Gauss. In his preface, Professor Gauss of Princeton University wrote that he had done what others had maintained could not be done--advanced an indictment against a whole people for their complicity in the "crimes of their rulers." In this respect, Gauss represented a minority report among writers concerned with war responsibility, most of whom preferred to distinguish between the governed and the governors.

Wars, Gauss maintained, were the final expression of fundamental antagonisms between nations, and the reason for World War I was not the boundaries at stake but the ideals of the opposing camps. Real causes then were not to be found in the Balkans or Near East but in the basic differences between autocracy and democracy. The Prussian detested democracy. The German ideas on the mission of Germany, the morality of the state and the place and function of the military in society were "not only divergent, but absolutely incompatible with those of the West. We must not delude ourselves that the gulf between democracy and Prussianism can easily be bridged."²⁷

Gone is the fair-haired German who loved his pipe and his fiddlers three, Gauss argued. The German people,

²⁷Christian Gauss, Why We Went to War (New York: Scribners & Sons, 1918), pp. 3-4.

however, were still docile, or they would never have been willing to submit to the yoke of autocracy. The acceptance of the military junkers in Germany was easily understood. Very simply, there was no difference between the ruled and the rulers in Germany. The difference was between the Germans and Americans.²⁸

The central and ineradicable difference between the West and Germany, Gauss contended, was the difference between freedom and autocracy--between feudalism and democracy. The most serious mistake the people of the United States could make, Gauss warned, would be to believe that the German autocracy existed through the force of the ruler. The German state was not an amalgam forced into cohesion by pressure from above. It had the two requisites to longevity: power from above and confidence from below.²⁹ The spirit inculcated in the German people was the secret of World War I. The German fought not for humanity, but as the Mohammedan fought and died for Islam. The people were laboring under a sort of mass hypnosis by which the mission, power and privilege of the German state manifested themselves in an area above the American conception of right and wrong. Prussian fanaticism and mysticism were the real causes of the war.

To understand German diplomacy and German psychology, the Princeton professor wrote, it must be understood that

²⁸Gauss, pp. 10-11.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 15-17.

the Prussian regards all other states as rivals. The life of the state came not from its own strength but from the livelihood of other states. From such a theory came the Prussian justification for war. Too long a peace was considered a national calamity, and Germany had been at peace for more than forty years in 1914. "The time had come for the great catharsis which would restore the state to its primitive health."³⁰

Americans insisted upon a German inability to understand the psychology of other peoples. An understanding of German psychology was, the author claimed, an absolute necessity for the well-being of the United States. They, the Germans, were a different people, nationalistic and imperialistic in temperament, who believed in the superiority of their mission. Their young had not been raised to respect "a Washington or a Lincoln." Their national heroes were "men of force who succeeded through deceit."³¹

Gauss assimilated the testimony of Morgenthau, Lichnowsky and Meuhlon to substantiate his charge that Germany gave to her "cat's paw," Austria, an unconditional "blank check." His inferences to the effect that, if Germany was successful in Europe, the United States would next bear the brunt of Prussian autocracy was conjecture pure and simple. The argument that Gauss, as a professor in modern languages, cannot be viewed as representative of

³⁰Gauss, p. 46.

³¹Ibid., pp. 73-74.

the American historical profession is tenable only until his thesis is found echoed in the works of other more "scholarly" writers, including those of some of the most eminent of American historians. Like Gauss, nearly all of the early war guilt writers tried their hand at psycho-analysing the German nation, and in each instance, the conclusions drawn were strikingly similar to those of Gauss.

That the Princeton professor bore out popular sentiment was evidenced by a review in the New York Times lauding his diatribe as a "calm, well-resolved and convincing book." A review in the American Historical Review recommended the volume to historians interested in the origins of the war and complimented the author for the skill with which the material was handled and for his "sobriety of judgment" which resulted in "one of the best volumes on the war."³²

The European Anarchy by G. Lowes Dickinson was published initially in the British Isles and proved so popular and successful, propagandistically speaking, that it was reprinted with appropriate additions and deletions for the American audience in 1917. Its importance, other than seconding previously made unfounded charges, lies in the fact that American historians leaned heavily on Professor Dickinson's conclusions. According to Professor Oliver P.

³²Samuel B. Harding, Review of Why We Went to War, by Christian Gauss, American Historical Review, XXIV, No. 3 (June, 1919), 520-21.

Chitwood of University of West Virginia, one of the leading American students of the war guilt question, Dickinson's work was essential to any understanding of the period leading up to the outbreak of hostilities.³³ With all due credit to Dickinson, it should be added that he was not one to "stand pat" after his 1917 thesis had been invalidated by subsequent scholarship. In 1926 when it became apparent that his wartime view of responsibility was no longer tenable, Dickinson revised his earlier interpretation under the title, The International Anarchy.³⁴

In his earlier volume, however, Dickinson viewed the events leading up to World War I with the same subjectivity that infected the work of his American colleague, Christian Gauss. The spirit of Bismark, Dickinson wrote, infected the whole of German public life. It gave a new lease to the political philosophy of Machiavelli.³⁵ Admitting that jingoism existed in all nations, the author asserted the "brand" found in Germany was peculiar both in intensity and in its character. Germans were romantic to the extent that they did not see willingly things as they were. Their temperament magnified, distorted, concealed and transmuted everything. Because of these peculiarities,

³³Chitwood referred the student to the "charming" Dickinson thesis in the introduction to his The Immediate Causes of the Great War. See below.

³⁴G. Lowes Dickinson, The International Anarchy, 1904-1914. London: The Macmillan Co., 1926.

³⁵G. Lowes Dickinson, The European Anarchy (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1917), p. 41.

the German character was unique, and one found a romantic enthusiasm, a willful blindness, toward the realities of war. One peculiarity in German jingoism uncommon to that of other western nations, Dickinson argued, was its emphasis on an "unintelligible and unreal abstraction of race." The Germans viewed themselves as the "salt of the earth," and their mission took form in efforts to spread the Teutonic "enlightenment" to their less fortunate neighbors.

Dickinson concluded his psychological analysis of Germany with the stock assertion that Germany was guilty of giving the Dual Monarchy a "blank check" after June 28, 1914. He conceded, however, that most Germans conceived the conflict as a "preventive war," meaning if Germany did not fight in 1914, she would be compelled to do so later and under less advantageous circumstances.

Frank H. Simonds, in his multi-volume series, The History of the World War, adopted a similar central theme for the first volume devoted in part to a discussion of the war's background. In its inception, Simonds wrote, the war seemed no more than another war, more terrible than those in the past, but one comparable to them in origins and purposes. As the struggle progressed, however, it became clear that the German attack was more than a bid for world power. Germany had attacked the whole fabric of our common civilization and all the precepts and doctrines of humanity. Together with anger and detestation of German violence, it became recognized in

the United States that the war was, after all, a stand of autocracy against democracy.³⁶

Simonds purpose in writing was to set forth the "development of the world verdict against Germany." He made one concession to the German nation that few of his colleagues were willing to acknowledge with his assertion that the actual outbreak of hostilities was largely accidental. He quickly retrenched, however, writing that the conflict was an inevitable consequence of the new visions and purposes of the German people. That Germany actually brought on the war in the critical days of July, 1914, was an unsupported allegation; that her whole course after the Kaiser came to the throne was one of ruthless aggression was, according to Simonds, hardly to be mistaken.³⁷

The "cause" for which the Allies were fighting provided the central theme for a series, Readings in Contemporary History and Literature, published originally for use in a special "war issues" course at the United States Naval Academy and later disseminated to the general public under the auspices of the Creel Committee. According to the introduction to "World War and Ideals," one in the series edited by two members of the Academy faculty, the purpose of the book was "to enhance the

³⁶Frank H. Simonds, The History of the World War (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1917), I, vii-viii.

³⁷Ibid., p. 62.

morale of the members of the Corps by giving them an understanding of what the war is about and the supreme importance to civilization of the cause for which we are fighting."

In setting forth the thesis around which the book was centered, the editors wrote that the democracies of the world were pitted against the last stronghold of autocracy in a conflict thrust upon them by the dynastic policy of a set of rulers who used the "Divine Right" concept to further their personal ends.³⁸ To support their basic premises, the editors chose those authors who best illustrated the democratic tendencies of the Entente powers. Probably written before the Bolshevik Revolution, Russia was portrayed by the authors as having finally seen the light and having thrown off the chains of autocracy, was developing upon a basis of universal suffrage and republican institutions.

Innumerable additional examples of authors who analyzed the events preceeding the war from an "autocracy versus democracy" perspective could be cited. This was not history in any sense of the word. In each of the apocryphal accounts considered above, autocracy, exemplified by Germany, occupied the center of the stage in the role of a villain whose "mission" was the domination of Europe or, as Gauss suggested,

³⁸Walter B. Norris and Morris E. Speare (eds.), "World War and Ideals", Readings in Contemporary History and Literature (New York: Ginn & Co., 1918), p. 20.

the world. The Entente powers, on the other hand, were cast in the role of heroes fighting desperately to prevent further autocratic depredations against the "free" world. To relate the history of Europe between 1871 and 1914 in terms of good and evil as Gauss and others did would indeed have required a vivid imagination, although the scarcity of reliable information bearing on the war's origins no doubt helped. Besides an incredible quality of subjectivity which permeated each of the volumes examined above, the outstanding characteristic of each of them was the penchant of their authors to blacks and whites. Generalizations which might have been substantiated in isolated instances were indiscriminately applied to answer a multitude of problems. That human beings act differently under varying circumstances apparently never occurred to these writers who deduced the origins of the war from the original hypothesis that Germany was guilty.

III

Another popular line taken by writers then dealing with the causes of World War I was the legalistic approach first set forth in the United States by James M. Beck in The Evidence in the Case. Beck's argument was in the form of a legal brief based on "evidence" gleaned from his less than acute analysis of the early "colored books." The folly of drawing historical interpretations from the 1914 belligerent apologies has already been noted.

Fundamentally, Beck's thesis was built around the

assumption that Germany, as a violator of international law, was as liable for punishment as the criminal under civil law. Having designated himself prosecuting attorney, Beck assimilated into a concise brief the "evidence" by which the "Supreme Court of Civilization" might arrive at a verdict. In developing his case, the former United States Attorney General found "conclusive proof" that the German foreign office was not only consulted by Austria previous to the ultimatum to Serbia, but that Germany, in fact, gave to the Dual Monarchy an unlimited "blank check." Like most of his colleagues publishing on the origins of the war, Beck distinguished between the ruling caste and the German masses since "this detestable war is not merely a crime against civilization but also against the decried and misled German people."³⁹

The writings of Bernhardi, Nietzsche and Treitschke nurtured German Junkerdom which was based on the philosophy of Machiavelli, the first to recognize that the state was power. There was, according to Beck, an emotional and mystical element in the advanced German thinker which made him capable of accepting in full sincerity intellectual and moral absurdities which intellectuals of other nations would never think of accepting. "The irrefutable proof of the acceptance of those philosophies was Belgium."⁴⁰

³⁹James M. Beck, The Evidence in the Case as to Moral Responsibility for the War (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1915), p. xxvi.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 9-11

Because the German government never officially repudiated the ideas of individuals like Nietzsche and Treitschke, their words were seen as the guiding lights for all modern German thinkers, an assumption Beck would indeed find difficult to substantiate.

While the 1914 apologies of the Entente powers did not show evidence of suppression of facts, the obvious inaccuracies in the German White Paper disclosed an unmistakable purpose "amounting to an open confession that they intended to force their will upon Europe even though this course involved the most stupendous war in man's history."⁴¹ Without informing their conferees in the European family of nations, Germany and Austria "torpedoed" civilization. Austria could not possibly have proceeded in a war which would inevitably incur the wrath of Russia without absolute assurances of German support. Germany felt that Austria should be allowed to proceed against Serbia unabettted but denied the right of any state to support Serbia. This, according to Beck, was Germany's "tragedy of errors."⁴²

During the "Twelve Days," every proposal to preserve peace came from the Entente camp, and every such suggestion was met with an uncompromising negative from Austria and either that or obstructive quibbles from Germany. The Kaiser gave his assent to the Austrian

⁴¹Beck, p. 30.

⁴²Ibid., p. 40.

coup in the hope that some of the German prestige lost in North Africa might be regained. Russia, William II felt sure, would follow the same course she had in the Bosnian crisis and acquiesce in the Dual Monarchy's action. Realizing he had gone too far, the Kaiser hastened back from his Norwegian cruise, but it was too late. "A Washington would have saved the situation, but the Kaiser was not a Washington."⁴³

Beck pursued his almost totally indefensible indictment concentrating on German actions in the last few days before the declaration of war on Russia. Although Germany was urged by England and France to await the result of the Austro-Russian conversations, her declaration of war rendered peace impossible. The German justification for her actions based on the argument that she did not wish to forego the advantage of speed in mobilization against the Russian numerical superiority was the "clearest disloyalty to civilization." It must be assumed, Beck surmised, that, in tendering the German ultimatum to Russia protesting that nation's mobilization, the Kaiser wished war. "Such will be his awful responsibility...and the verdict of history."⁴⁴

The thesis propounded by Beck, as baseless as his charges may seem today, gave impetus to others writing in a similar, though often less vituperative, vein. One of

⁴³Beck, p. 112.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 189.

these was Ellery Stowell of Columbia University. He attacked the German defense which held that the premature Russian mobilization made impossible the acceptance of British Foreign Minister Grey's eleventh hour proposal for mediation. German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, Stowell inaccurately pointed out, cherished the belief that England and France should have compelled Russia to desist, while Germany refused at every turn to restrain Austria. To the everlasting honor of England, Stowell wrote, she refused to back France in any aggressive war. To Germany's dishonor, she refused to take a similar stand in regard to the Dual Monarchy, insisting that German interests were such that support of Austria was mandatory.⁴⁵

The fact that Bethmann-Hollweg had been unable to discover any evidence to lessen his nation's responsibility was, according to Stowell, less important than the fact that the effort was made. "It is an indication that Germany recognizes her responsibility before the bar of the world's opinion."⁴⁶

Other examples of historians and pseudo-historians who viewed the war guilt problem legalistically might be mentioned, but it would serve no purpose since most of them merely echoed what the progenitor of the thesis, James M. Beck, had written in 1915.

⁴⁵Ellery C. Stowell, "Responsibility for the War," The New Republic, IX, No. 116 (January 20, 1917), 328.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 329.

IV

After the publication of Roland G. Usher's Pan-Germanism in 1914, there was a great vogue among American historians to base their analyses of the causes of the war on the central theme of alleged Pan-German activities. Prepared for publication prior to the outbreak of the war, there are throughout the book evidences of an objective survey of the subject matter. Before its appearance, however, the manuscript was edited and chapters were added in the light of what transpired in 1914 with the result that the study took on a pro-Entente flavor.

It was Usher's contention that Germany aimed at nothing short of world dominion. Known to all European diplomats, it was this factor that compelled the belligerents of 1914 in the courses they had charted after 1871. The historian too, according to Usher, was in the "enviable" position of knowing of the plans or long-range schemes of the various European states far more certainly than he did the minutiae of their execution. In other words, it was not only the statesmen of Europe who were aware of the German "plan" of world conquest; it was also apparent to the world's scholars. Only the method by which the plan was to be executed remained a mystery. Because of the extraordinary position of the historian, Usher, a professor at Washington University, advised his colleagues to be prepared to interpret current events in the light of schemes or ends which were known

to be in the minds of statesmen.⁴⁷ Usher, in effect, openly advocated a reversion from the empirical method applied to history where the facts form the foundation for the hypothesis in favor of the Cartesian method whereby the premises are formulated first, and the facts follow. The danger inherent in such an approach is the tendency to make the facts fit neatly into a preconceived thesis. This methodology was not unique with Usher, but he was one of the few professional historians who admitted using such a technique to analyse the origins of the war. Such an approach to history admittedly is valid in certain instances where the basic premise is an accepted fact, but to apply the deductive method of reasoning to the study of the causes for any war, especially while hostilities are in progress, leaves the scholar wide open to criticism. Having established the use of the deductive method for solving a problem, the question which inevitably poses itself is, "What was the basic hypothesis from which the student began his investigation?" In Usher's case, it was admittedly that Germany had long planned for the conquest of the world, and the war was viewed as the culmination of German dreams. With such a "fact" established, it goes without saying that Germany was guilty of precipitating the war.

Although Bismark was the first German statesman

⁴⁷Roland G. Usher, Pan-Germanism (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914), pp. 116-17.

to see the possibilities of Pan-Germanism, Admiral von Tirpitz and William II "were responsible for bringing it to its present state of perfection"--an excellence which was achieved after an evolution through three stages. After unification, German policy aimed: first, at territorial and economic aggrandisement in the form of colonies; secondly, at attempting to secure markets in the East by the establishment of a trade route through the Balkans and Turkey; and thirdly, at the determination of an aggressive scheme for the forcible conquest of the world.⁴⁸

Usher conceded that Germany may not have wished the war on the particular day that it came, but, since the holocaust was "inevitable," the German position was such that prosecution of a war in 1914 gave her an advantage over her adversaries. Whether the decision to strike was reached because the moment seemed propitious or because longer delay would be damaging, Usher speculated that the details of preparation that were completed by August 1 required at least six weeks for execution. The decision to go to war then had to be reached in Berlin and Vienna not later than mid-June, 1914, two weeks before the murder of the Austrian heir apparent. Although the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand came as a surprise to Pan-Germans, Usher charged that it was better adapted to their needs as a casus belli than anything they could

⁴⁸Usher, p. 119.

have possibly devised.⁴⁹

Usher's two-sided approach to his problem can be seen in those portions of his work written before the outbreak of hostilities in Europe where he recognized Pan-Germanism, not as a movement threatening civilization, but as an expression of the national determination to preserve and strengthen the corporate life of a great people. The two nations promoting Pan-Germanism, Usher wrote in contradistinction to ideas interwoven into other parts of his work, were not different from others in either morals or aims.⁵⁰ Historically speaking, Usher's position would have been more easily defended had not a duality of approach been the transcendent characteristic of Pan-Germanism.

Through the periodical medium, Usher pursued the thesis initiated in his book and pointed out that the real causes for the outbreak of the war "lie less in the domestic relations between the two countries, Austria and Serbia, than in the general European situation in the fourth week of July, 1914."⁵¹ At first glance, such a statement appears to be a recantation of some of the absurdities given expression in his book. The impression is unwarranted, however, since Usher quickly lapsed back

⁴⁹Usher, pp. 263-64.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 295.

⁵¹Roland G. Usher, "The Reasons Behind the War," The Atlantic, CXIV, No. 4 (October, 1914), 445.

into his earlier thesis.

To the Austrian, he wrote, the war appeared as a struggle for self-preservation since a large segment of her population looked to pesky Serbia for leadership. It was, as far as the Dual Monarchy was concerned, a war to end forever the attempts by Serbia to disrupt the Empire, a legitimate endeavor prompted by Austrian national interests.⁵² By the German, however, the war was viewed differently. The Pan-German had long dreamed of the creation of a confederation stretching from the Baltic to the Mediterranean under German protection. Hence, she welcomed the Austrian activity in the Balkans since control over that area was requisite to a successful consummation of the German-dominated Balkan confederation, the first step in Germany's "world plan."

The time seemed favorable for an Austrian move in the summer of 1914 before the small Balkan states had had an opportunity to recover from the ravages of the two recent wars. Usher suggested two basic causes for the Austro-Serbian war: the disadvantage of the moment to the Triple Entente and its advantage to the Triple Alliance, and the current belief in Germany and Austria that the balance of power might swing so decisively in the opposite direction that action in the future might become impossible.⁵³

The carte blanche was given Austria by Germany in

⁵²Usher, The Atlantic, CXIV, No. 4, 445.

⁵³Ibid., p. 451.

the 1908 Bosnian crisis, not in 1914 as most historians contended. Austria would never have undertaken the annexations with such vigor had not the alliance with Germany been of unlimited extent.⁵⁴ The promptitude of support and the decidedly "unquestioned harmony" between Austria and Germany was such by 1914 that little doubt could be held by the "serious student" of the war's origins that the demands made on Serbia by the Dual Monarchy had the complete approval of Germany. Those demands, Usher surmised, constituted irrevocable proof that Austria and Germany wished to collectively precipitate a general European war.⁵⁵

Usher's sentiments were echoed in a Living Age editorial entitled the "Origins of the War." The real cause of the war was the seizure of the German nation by an impulse prompted by the thought of "now or never." The Pan-Germans held it a crime not to strike when they were convinced that their nation had a preponderance of power. Furthermore, the ineffectiveness of the Austrian army in Serbia led to the logical conclusion that it never had been the intention of the Dual Monarchy to punish Serbia but to plunge Europe into a war at Germany's behest.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Roland G. Usher, "Austro-German Relations since 1866," American Historical Review, XXIII, No. 3 (April, 1918), 594.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 595.

⁵⁶"The Origin of the War," Living Age, CCLXXXII, No. 3362 (September 12, 1914), 684.

For a defense of the above explanation for the outbreak of the war, the editor reasoned that it was the only interpretation that could be substantiated by "facts," but what those facts were was left to the reader's imagination.

The war could not be thought of intelligibly, wrote another pseudo-historian in a similar vein, unless it was assumed that Germany and Austria were seeking to achieve world domination. Whatever the true cause of the war, the "vital interests" with which the Pan-Germans toyed at the outset were little more than an excuse for the hostilities. What became of Serbia after being made the scapegoat for the cause of the conflagration was as unimportant to Austria as the fate of Princip, "the half-forgotten hero of Sarajevo."⁵⁷

Herbert A. Gibbons in The New Map of Europe listed the causes for the war, the first of which was the alliance system which evolved out of German activity following the Franco-Prussian War. The second, Gibbons wrote seconding Usher's groundless contentions, was the Weltipolitik [world policy] or Pan-Germanism which brought Germany into conflict with Great Britain and France outside Europe and with Russia in Europe.⁵⁸

There was, according to Gibbons, a "striking analogy"

⁵⁷"Vital Interests a Year Later," The New Republic, III, No. 38 (July 24, 1915), 298.

⁵⁸Herbert Adams Gibbons, The New Map of Europe, 1911-1914 (New York: The Century Co., 1917), p. 22.

between the Germans in 1914 and the Jacobins of Revolutionary France. As in 1793, the love for humanity had turned into blood lust and the battle for freedom into a search for booty and glory. The profound thinker in German universities and the visionaries on the workingmen's forums were following the same path as the French Revolutionaries, and the "mission" of 1871 had been perverted. The idea of the German mission was not unique to the nineteenth or twentieth century, however. Since the beginning of history Germany had been a "war man," always asserting himself by force. "The leopard cannot change his spots; so it is natural for the Germany of the twentieth century to use the sword as it was for Germany of the tenth or first century."⁵⁹

Adopting a Gauss-like approach to German guilt, Gibbons disputed the contention that it was members of the German ruling clique who were responsible for precipitating the conflict. A review of German newspapers substantiated to Gibbons' satisfaction the charge that German public opinion more often than not forced the hand of the foreign office and caused its high-handed actions. "German public opinion...is for this war to the bitter finish. It is the war of the people, intelligently and deliberately willed by them."⁶⁰ The Gibbons invective then was not directed at the rulers of Germany; like his

⁵⁹Gibbons, pp. 32-37.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 56-57.

Princeton colleague, he charged the entire German nation with a crime against humanity.

A third cause for the war was Pan-German activity in the Ottoman Empire which resulted in the elevation of Germany to the position previously held by Great Britain. The most conspicuous thread in the web woven in Constantinople was the Bagdadbahn. German intrigue in Morocco, the aftermath of which was an increase in naval and military armaments and the creation of a spirit of tension, merely added fuel to the fire already built by the Pan-Germans in the Balkans and made inevitable the clash between Teuton and Gaul.

The situation in June, 1913, was as grave as that of July, 1914, and in both cases, Serbia backed down. In 1914, however, Germany and Austria were determined to provoke a war which would end the nemesis of Serbia and spell the end of the traditional Russian "protectorate" over the Balkan Slavs. In the final analysis, Gibbons maintained that there could be little doubt that the war was deliberately willed by the German government, motivated by Pan-Germanists and public prodding, and that the chain of circumstances which brought on the holocaust was carefully linked together by officials of Germany and Austria-Hungary. After the Moroccan and Persian settlements, the question most heard on German street corners was not, "Will there be a war?," but "How soon will it come?"⁶¹ In

⁶¹Gibbons, p. 387.

supporting the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, Germany was not responding to an overt act by the enemy. She calculated carefully the cost, awaited the favorable moment and then deliberately provoked the war. The only way the war might have been avoided would have been to allow Germany to "draw a new map of Europe."

The outstanding characteristic of Gibbons work was the conspicuous absence of annotation. He excused himself on this count and for his failure to include a bibliography to which the student might refer with the comment that his references were too numerous--a novel explanation to say the least.

The Pan-German theme was central to The Roots of the War written collectively by William Davis, William Anderson and Mason Tyler, professors of history at the University of Minnesota. The most noticeable difference between this work and those of other early war guilt students was the attention accorded "remote" causes. Although consideration was given only those events which fit comfortably into their general thesis, the acknowledgement by the Minnesota historians that underlying as well as immediate causes were important gives the work a more scholarly appearance than those of most of their colleagues. While the acknowledgement of the importance of remote causes is commendable and worthy of mention, the introduction to the volume casts unfavorable aspersions on the interpretations reached by the authors. Published after the United States decision

to go to war, the authors introduced their work saying the book was written with a due sense of historical as well as patriotic responsibility. Had the result of the research been unfavorable to the "justice" of the Entente cause, the work would not have been published until the war's end. A discussion of whether or not the passing of moral judgments is an integral part of objective history lies outside the scope of this study. Suffice to say that such a statement leads logically to the conclusion that the work, which purported to be an objective survey of the events leading to the war, was but another subjective interpretation of those events.

Three factors, hate between Germany and France over Alsace-Lorraine, hate between Germany and Great Britain emanating from commercial rivalry and the disposition of the Ottoman Empire, the authors contended, played simultaneously into the hands of Pan-German schemers. Manipulating the three factors, the German imperialists set out to deliberately precipitate a war which was seen as the first step in the establishment of a world empire, an "Empire of Teutonia," more universal than that of Rome. After pointing out the importance of understanding the diplomatic history of Europe from 1871 to 1914, the authors reverted to the stock Pan-German, "autocracy versus democracy," explanation of the war's origins. In their discussion of the diplomacy leading to war, the authors pointed out some of the evidence used by the later re-

visionists to acquit Germany such as the "encirclement theory." Although the Franco-Russian rapprochement kept alive French hopes for a successful war on Germany, the authors insisted that the "real" causes of the war were to be found elsewhere.⁶²

Between 1871 and 1914, the democratic ideal made progress in every civilized state save Germany. If her "intelligent monarchy" was to prove a lasting success, it would be a set-back to democracy which would be branded as incapable of governing the most formidable and progressive nation in Europe. For a new lease on life the despotic foes of democracy could thank Otto von Bismark for the foundations he erected in Germany. In 1888, William II began to reign. In 1890 after the retirement of the "Iron Chancellor," he began to govern. The strong arm of Bismark had paved the way for an "unenlightened" despotism. The unification of Prussian Junkerdom and the monarchy in Germany put democracy on the defensive all over the world. "People were beginning to doubt whether the democracies of the United States and Great Britain were all that was claimed."⁶³

The evidence was clear, the authors argued, that Germany planned a war against France in 1875, a supposition disputed by later, more objective historians.

⁶²William Anderson, William S. Davis and Mason W. Tyler, The Roots of the War (New York: The Century Co., 1918), p. 135.

⁶³Ibid., p. 199.

Because of English and Russian objections, however, Bismark subsided, but the Chancellor had found that he could no longer reckon on steadfast Russian support despite the League of the Three Emperors. Russian vacillations resulted in Bismark's "smashing" of the Treaty of San Stefano, increased German intrigue in the Balkans and Turkey and eventually in the Austro-German alliance. Austria had been substituted for Russia as Germany's vassal. Had Germany chosen to ally herself to Russia, the authors maintained, it would have had to be as an equal, but Austria could easily be subjugated by her senior partner. Recent historians have cautioned against acceptance of the "horse and rider theory" as the motivating factor behind the erection of the rival alliance systems.

The reason for the failure of The Hague Conventions on armaments in 1899 and 1907, according to the authors, was the refusal of Germany to accept the recommendations of the commissions. Since no clause could be found which did not raise a German objection, Germany was the death of arbitration. She made certain that Europe would continue to be governed by fear--the growing animosity between England and Germany, the German dread of Russia and Germany's abhorrence of everything for which France stood. The feelings between the nations of Europe were reciprocal, but, the authors maintained, the hatreds in Germany were stronger toward her neighbors than were those of her neighbors toward her.

The Pan-German, at whose door the Minnesota historians ultimately placed the blame for World War I, found his teachers in Friederich Nietzsche and Heinrich von Treitschke. The former did not create Pan-Germanism, but he did supply it with a philosophic stimulus and a semblance of intellectual authority which fertilized its soil. Treitschke was far mightier than Nietzsche. The influence he wielded from the University of Berlin was equal to that of the Kaiser's ministers. Together, Nietzsche and Treitschke pointed the way for three groups, the Prussian Junkers, the university professors and the great manufacturers. The seeds of Armageddon, originally sown by Treitschke and Nietzsche, were later cultivated by Bernhardi, von Moltke and William II.⁶⁴

The fruits of the Pan-German propaganda were harvested in the Moroccan crises. The German position in respect to North Africa was largely determined by her late arrival as a colonial power. It seemed to the Pan-German that the last "white man's country" was passing into the arms of France. By the time the "unnerved" Pan-German moved, the real question, the disposition of North Africa was lost, and the larger question--the division of the world--remained. At bottom, the authors surmised, it was a question of prestige that motivated the Pan-Germans.⁶⁵

After the loss of face in Morocco, German imperial-

⁶⁴Anderson, Davis and Tyler, pp. 354-56.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 407.

ists began a vigorous prosecution of the means by which their ends might be attained. According to the Minnesota scholars, the Bosnian crisis of 1908 was a "direct sowing of the dragon's teeth." The two Kaisers had rattled their swords, and England and Russia alike declined to fight.⁶⁶ If not directly, at least indirectly, German intrigue in the Balkans was responsible for the First and Second Balkan Wars. In 1914, the dreams of all Pan-Germans were about to be realized. The war machine that had stood silent for forty-three years was to resume its appointed and glorious task. From the inception of Pan-Germanism, Austria had demonstrated her servility before her infinitely more masterful and intelligent ally. The more the "plot" of July, 1914 was examined, the authors argued, the more fixed became the conviction that the Pan-Germans had adopted a deliberate project for achieving world domination through three separate, but remotely connected stages: (1) the defeat of Russia and France and the subsequent establishment of Teutonic influence across the Balkans and Turkey; (2) the defeat of Great Britain, the seizure of British colonies and the substitution of German for British seapower; and (3) the violation of the Monroe Doctrine to permit German dominance in Latin America. Had Great Britain stood aloof, the "plan" called next for the conquest of the United States.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Anderson, Davis and Tyler, p. 451.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 515-17.

On the question of whether or not Germany gave her ally a "blank check," the Minnesota historians hedged, but they disputed the honesty of German officials who denied knowledge of the contents of the Austrian note. The evidence then available led the three authors to assume that the German government knew that Austria intended to precipitate a conflict menacing to the peace of Europe and that she encouraged her ally to accomplish her selfish ends. "Such evidence would be enough for the densest jury."⁶⁸

Frederich C. Howe, noted American lawyer and author, examined the origins of the war from essentially the same perspective but did not exhibit a sense of patriotism equal to that of the Minnesota scholars. The Pan-German moves in the Balkans, initiated in 1888 when concessions for building the Bagdad Railroad were obtained, were seen by Howe as the cause for the economic rivalry between Great Britain and Germany which eventually led to the war. The protection by the two nations of what each of them considered her exclusive rights in the Near East led to an environment conducive to war.⁶⁹

An attempt has been made in this section to outline the theses of some American historians and would-be historians who were wont to explain the origins of the war

⁶⁸Anderson, Davis and Tyler, p. 502.

⁶⁹Frederich C. Howe, "The Heart of the War," Harper's Magazine, CXXXVI, No. 5 (April, 1918), 729.

primarily in terms of alleged Pan-German activities. Although some of the authors considered looked to the more remote causes of the war, their conclusions did not deviate from those of their colleagues who examined only the immediate causes. In each case, it was the intrigue of the Pan-Germans at home and abroad that was seen as the principle cause for World War I.

V

One segment or "school" of early American war guilt scholars defies classification. The work of this group is, however, characterized by one common denominator, a tendency to examine only the immediate causes in assessing the responsibility for World War I. Most of them felt there was no need to consider remote or fundamental causes since the traditional antagonisms, which had for decades disrupted European tranquility, had subsided by 1914. Indeed, many authors, after the Moroccan and Persian settlements, felt Europe was witnessing a new dawn of international understanding. Since the century-old national animosities were seemingly settled, they reasoned, it was the immediate causes--the events between June 28 and August 1, 1914--that were of primary interest to the student of the war's origins.

Publishing in 1915, Ellery C. Stowell, unaffected by American implication in "Europe's War," took a position which approached that of the later revisionist historians, although he was concerned principally with immediate causes.

Looking at the problem of war guilt from a legalistic perspective, Stowell discussed the "unnatural, perpetual neutrality" of Belgium which, in 1839, had been forced on the Francophile nation by the astute Lord Palmerston. Since Germany violated Belgian neutrality--a situation to which she had pledged her adherence--she was guilty of a crime against the family of nations.

In a sense, the author here examined a "remote" cause of the war, but the fact remains, Stowell used only those events from the diplomatic history of nineteenth century Europe that fit comfortably into his thesis, and his attention was primarily directed at the diplomacy of the year 1914. Although his theme is more palatable to the student than those of most of his contemporaries, he still fell victim to the methodology used by some of his colleagues discussing the beginnings of the "Great War." Deductively from a basic hypothesis, Stowell constructed his case against the Central Powers.

The major portion of the author's research was accorded the Austro-Serbian crisis. It was inexplicable, even in the face of a most serious grievance against her, that Austria should "proceed so far in the abuse of force before there had been any opportunity for investigation by the powers."⁷⁰ Unexposed to the "illuminating" evidence presented the world by Ambassador Morgenthau, Stowell accepted

⁷⁰ Ellery C. Stowell, The Diplomacy of the War of 1914 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1915), p. 95.

the official German statement that she had not received a prior communication of the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia. It was, however, evident to Stowell that Germany "took particular pains to be in a position where she could proclaim ignorance of the note." The advancement of German aims in the Balkans would best be served by such a position. If she were ignorant of the contents of the Austrian ultimatum, she might refuse arbitration and insist on a localized conflict.⁷¹

The disturbance of the balance of power emanating from the consolidation of the European alliances was not, Stowell maintained, a cause for the war. Rather, it was the state of mind created by the disturbance of the erstwhile balance. When German leaders recognized the potential of the coalition facing them, they felt it mandatory that a telling blow be quickly delivered. When the German point of view, philosophy of life and the influence of the large military caste were taken into consideration, it was inevitable that Belgium would be brushed aside to lose no time in subjugating France.⁷²

Adopting the "divided responsibility" thesis in preference to the "sole German war guilt" theory, Stowell anticipated later revisionist assessments of responsibility. His conclusions, however, were radically different from the historians writing after 1920. Austria, the Columbia

⁷¹Stowell, pp. 121-23.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 480-81.

professor argued, must accept principal blame for the deliberate manner in which she concealed her intentions while she prepared an impossible ultimatum. "Here, in the first instance, must be blamed the war in which Europe is now engaged."⁷³ Since arbitration between Russia and Austria had been the accepted precedent for settling Balkan disputes, Germany's refusal to allow mediation of the Austro-Serbian quarrel assured for herself a grave responsibility. Adopting the "horse and rider theory," Stowell explained that Germany, because of her irreconcilable stand and her superior intellectual and material development, accepted a larger share of the responsibility for precipitating the general European war than her ally. "She risked the peace of Europe in a campaign after prestige."⁷⁴

Stowell dismissed Russian mobilization as an immediate cause for the war because she had had provocation from both of the Central Powers. In the final analysis, Russian action was a direct result of Germany's refusal to allow the Austro-Russian difficulties to be solved in the manner applicable to Balkan disputes. England too was absolved of any part of the blame since it was "unthinkable" that England might remain neutral in the face of a German violation of Belgian neutrality.

The actions of all European states were contributory

⁷³Stowell, p. 483.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 485.

causes for the war, but the motivating force behind the courses charted by each of the various nations, including the Dual Monarchy, was German provocation. In standing between Austria and diplomatic intervention by the powers, Germany assumed before civilization "the full responsibility for Austrian action."⁷⁵ [*Italics mine.*] By her refusal to cooperate with her sister states, Germany shouldered by far the heaviest responsibility for the war.

For an explanation of the German actions in 1914, Stowell looked to the "state of mind" in Germany after unification. Instead of revering a Lincoln or "that other hero who could not tell a lie," the people of Germany paid homage to a man, William II, who trampled the express provisions of the constitution and a statesman, Bismark, who knew how to suppress a part of the truth. The European War offered a vivid example of the mental mobilization of a whole nation. The German people united themselves in support of the fundamental idea which lay at the base of German political action--a worshiping of the national existence expressed in an almost mystical adoration of the state.⁷⁶

The futility of attempting to write objective history within a psychological framework has been alluded to above. Stowell affords yet another example of an outstanding

⁷⁵Stowell, p. 491.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 507-510.

American scholar falling victim to generalizing on a nation's character. In explaining the origins of the war psychologically, the Columbia professor relegated himself to the position of a Gauss and left the impression that his purpose in writing was first and foremost vindictive and only secondly to throw some light on the events surrounding the outbreak of the war.

Arthur O. Lovejoy, publishing in The Nation, adopted Stowell's thesis that German actions explained the course followed by all European powers in the summer of 1914. Essentially, Lovejoy was concerned to disprove the German assertion that Russian mobilization was the real casus belli. Contrary to the official German explanation, the ultimatum delivered to Russia was a "conditional declaration of war." Officially, Germany had said she mobilized only after Russian mobilization, that is, on July 31. According to Lovejoy, the conference at Potsdam on the evening of July 29, where the German plea for British neutrality was drafted, constituted proof that Germany expected to go to war early in the last week in July.⁷⁷ Subsequent scholarship after 1920 proved that the conference of July 29 where the final plans for war were allegedly drafted was, in fact, never convened.

Professor Edward R. Turner of Yale University seconded the stand taken by Stowell that it was Germany which

⁷⁷Arthur O. Lovejoy, "What Was the Casus Belli?", The Nation, C, No. 2592 (March 4, 1915), 247.

shouldered the burden of the war guilt, although Turner saw Austria as a contributing factor. The direct cause of the war was the Austrian note to Serbia, and the nations responsible were Germany and Austria because of their unwillingness to confer with the interested powers. Turner dismissed the possibility that Austria, a vassal state to Germany, conceivably could have worked independently in dispatching the Austrian ultimatum. The eleventh hour decision at the Ballplatz to mediate with Russia absolved Austria of the immediate guilt and proved beyond "a shadow of a doubt" that Germany was the moving force behind the Austrian actions. The German refusal to allow arbitration of the dispute "proved" that the tension between Berlin and St. Petersburg exceeded that between St. Petersburg and Vienna.

The war resulted from a fatal series of mobilizations. Russian mobilization served as the German casus belli. Undecided whether or not to allow a partial mobilization against Austria at the outset, the German decision to forbid any mobilization whatsoever was the direct cause of the Russian mobilization in the north and ultimately the cause of the war.⁷⁸ To Turner, with a short-sighted view typical of the American historian of 1914-1920, the immediate cause of the outbreak of hostilities was Russian mobilization, but the "underlying" cause was the German

⁷⁸Edward R. Turner, "The Immediate Causes of the War," The Nation, CII, No. 2639 (January 27, 1916), 101.

ultimatum forbidding mobilization. The diplomacy of the previous forty-three years was inconsequential.

By 1916, Turner wrote, enough material had been published that it was possible for the historian to write above and beyond the realm of opinion. The most valuable documents upon which to base historical conclusions were the British Blue Book and the French Yellow Book⁷⁹ because, in every case, "they are complete and corroborate one another." On the other hand, the German White Book was "brief, sketchy and inspires little confidence."⁸⁰

Professor Oliver P. Chitwood of the University of West Virginia was the great exponent of the contention that an understanding of the remote causes of World War I was not so important as a knowledge of the immediate causes. That nation which "fans a smoldering feeling of rivalry into an act of hostility has committed a great sin."⁸¹ In support of his position, Chitwood maintained that the most serious questions threatening a breach in international relations had been settled by 1914. No question faced Europe that a desire for peace and wise diplomacy could not have solved. Still, Chitwood in practice discussed what other historians called remote

⁷⁹France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. La Guerre Européenne, 1914. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1914.

⁸⁰Turner, The Nation, CII, No. 2639, 99.

⁸¹Oliver P. Chitwood, The Immediate Causes of the Great War (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1917), p. v.

causes, the difference being that Chitwood extricated only those events, a discussion of which tended to corroborate his basic premise that it was the immediate cause which were really important. The principal direct cause of the war was Teutonic aggression in the Balkans. After 1878, that aggression, Chitwood asserted, evolved from dangerous to criminal. In 1911 and 1914, Germany obtained de jure recognition from Russia and England respectively of her railroad rights in the Balkans. The last difference between England and Germany had been amicably settled prior to the outbreak of hostilities.⁸² Pan-German aims in the Balkans had been realized, and a dispute in that area seemingly could be resolved without resorting to armed conflict.

Chitwood's thesis, after lightly disposing of all remote causes, was built around the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia. He cited evidence designed to prove the charge that the Serbian note was in reality a German-inspired document with an Austrian signature. The sources upon which he relied were the London Times which, in July, 1917, first enlightened the world with the suggestion that a war council had been convened at Potsdam July 5, 1914. The meeting, Chitwood asserted, discussed and decided upon all points to be included in the Austrian communication to Serbia. Since it was probable that Russia would refuse to submit to another affront to her

⁸²Chitwood, p. 14.

national dignity as "protector of the Balkan Slavs" and that war was likely to result, all parties attending the fateful conference anticipated the subsequent action by the belligerent powers.⁸³ Further substance was given the "Potsdam myth" by Lichnowsky's testifying that he had heard that all present at the Potsdam Conference "gave their unqualified assent" to the Serbian ultimatum with the further suggestion that it "would not be a bad thing if war with Russia should result."⁸⁴ The most damaging evidence of all, of course, was the Morgenthau tale.

The powers that started the flame were responsible for the world conflagration. Since the unreasonable Austrian ultimatum was the cause of the war, Great Britain, France and Russia were completely exonerated. Germany, however, by "her own admission," [Morgenthau's testimony] shared equally with Austria the responsibility for the demands made on Serbia. This "fact" established, the responsibility for the European war fell solely on Austria and Germany.

The testimony which Chitwood found so damning to the Central Powers was used by nearly every historian concerned with the origins of the war after the publication of the Morgenthau "revelations." It was principally from the evidence offered by the ex-ambassador, Lichnowsky and Meuhlon that the consideration of immediate causes rather

⁸³Chitwood, p. 63.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 64.

than remote causes became the vogue among American war guilt students. With such ostensibly reputable sources upon which to base historical conclusions, it appeared that the direct causes were indeed more important than the general diplomatic picture between 1871 and 1914. Of course, such an approach relieved the historian or pseudo-historian from tedious research entailed in examining and evaluating the more remote evidence on hand.

From the testimony concerning the Potsdam Conference, writers deduced a multitude of conclusions, few of which were warranted even if based upon that falsified information. For example, M. Louise McLoughlin, writing in Current History, intimated that the Potsdam Conference was not only concerned with the Austrian ultimatum, but that there, on July 5, 1914, a "deep laid" plan was drafted by the Central Powers in which the invasion of Belgium was only the first step toward world domination.⁸⁵

The naiveté of a writer who assumed that a plan for world conquest, even if one did exist, which it did not, could be conceived in one day or, for that matter, "Twelve Days" is quite beyond comprehension. There is absolutely no evidence, conclusive or otherwise, unless extracts are taken from the writings of extreme nationalistic German theoreticians and applied to real political situations, for the charge that Germany intended to conquer the world.

⁸⁵M. Louise McLoughlin, "The Beginnings of the War," Current History, XIII, No. 3 (December, 1917), 493.

That the German government never officially repudiated the statements of a few philosophers not even remotely connected to the government does not constitute "proof" of anything. The United States has never felt it necessary to officially condemn the ideas of American expansionists--geopoliticians like Alfred T. Mahan or politicians like Theodore Roosevelt--because their imperialistic philosophies have not been the prevailing guiding lights of American foreign policy. Neither were the ideas of Nietzsche or Treitschke necessarily the guide posts by which German statesmen wended their way diplomatically in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. American historians publishing in the period 1914-1920, however, were wont to adopt the preachings of any German whose ideas might fit conveniently into their general theses, and apply them as the motivation behind the actions of the German government. A case could conceivably be made that the United States wished to conquer the world if one were careful to pick and choose the sources upon which to base his thesis. When all of the facts were taken into consideration, however, such a thesis would crumble. This is precisely what happened to much of the "deathless prose" produced by American historians during the war years.

Rejecting the interpretation generally accepted by early students of responsibility, David J. Hill, a former United States ambassador to Germany, laid at the door of one man, William II, the blame for the World War. Before the answer to the Austrian note had even been received from

Serbia, the Kaiser, according to Hill, was arranging to confine the war to the continent, operating upon assurances, which Hill contended were never given, from King George that England would remain neutral. Despite his promises to Russia that he would use his influence to restrain Austria, William II "spoke not a word for peace."⁸⁶

Thinking he could have the war on his own terms, the Kaiser deliberately plunged the whole continent into war. His role consisted of "flashing his sword in the face of the Tsar determined Europe would have nothing to say about it." To the author, the war was a manifestation of the Kaiser's personal temperament. Hill, the diplomat-turned-historian, not only disregarded all remote causes, but he also wrote off the usually conceived immediate causes as immaterial, placing the responsibility solely on William II.

To Munroe Smith, the immediate causes of the war were of predominant importance since German foreign policy had changed very little after the retirement of Bismark. The aim of the Bismarkian policy was the prevention of a coalition of superior powers against Germany. Bismark's conduct of foreign affairs was quite in keeping with Theodore Roosevelt's formula. If he carried a big stick, he walked softly. "Only against France was the big stick occasionally shaken."⁸⁷

⁸⁶David J. Hill, "The Kaiser's Responsibility," Current History, XIII, No. 3 (December, 1917), 497.

⁸⁷Munroe Smith, Militarism and Statecraft (New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1918), p. 31

That policy was not changed after 1890 except in relation to Russia. The lapse of the Reinsurance Treaty in 1890 provided the event upon which the rival alliances were forged. This was the extent of Smith's analysis of what might be termed remote causes, although he, like many of his contemporaries, attempted to psycho-analyse the German nation and applied the nebulous, academic statements found in German intellectual history to real situations. The German actions in 1914, according to Smith, were attributable to a "state of mind" which evolved from a modest beginning provided by Machiavelli.

The most decisive of the immediate causes was the German decision to declare war because of Russian mobilization. The proper answer to mobilization was mobilization, not war.⁸⁸ In the brief time between the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia and the German ultimatum to Russia, every European power except Germany and the Dual Monarchy worked toward averting war. Even if German apologies were accepted, Smith argued, the burden of aggression could not be shifted from the Central Powers to the Allies unless Russian mobilization was an act of war, which was precisely what later "revisionists" contended.

The only feasible defense for the Central Powers, since they could not shift the responsibility to the Entente, was, according to Smith, the assumption that war was inevitable and that Germany and Austria engaged

⁸⁸Smith, pp. 46-47.

in a preventive war in 1914. Hostile Allied intentions that would prove such a statement, however, were nowhere to be found in the record.⁸⁹

Looking at the problem posed by the violation of Belgian territorial integrity from the moralist vantage point, Smith maintained that necessity could not justify the act. The only immediate sanction of international law was the reaction of general sentiment, and it was difficult to understand why the nation that found it necessary to "scrap" her treaty obligations should manifest indignation when she encountered general reprobation. On the face of the record--not the whole record but only those portions which Smith found compatible with his general thesis--the responsibility rested solely with the Central Powers. In 1914, the Austrian and German governments succumbed to the mistake Bismark had avoided and sacrificed the moral advantages of the defensive position in favor of the strategic advantages of a rapid attack.

To justify expansion through war, Smith searched German intellectual history for a philosophic doctrine which would suffice, and he found that Germany very simply had applied the Darwinian "survival of the fittest" to the competition among nations. In "Neo-Darwinism," Smith found an explanation for all German activity after unification. The German feeling of superiority, which was realized by interpreting and reinterpreting history, would be extended

⁸⁹Smith, pp. 55-59.

to all corners of the world after the struggle for power and the survival of those nations best qualified for dominion. Neo-Darwinism found a religious base in the German assumption that the struggle for power was the method of progress ordained by God.⁹⁰

Professor Smith recognized land hunger, national allusions of a mission and militaristic sentiment as contributing factors leading to World War I. These sociological phenomena could be seen in any nation at some time in its development in proper balance, but exaggeration of any one of them amounted to a "national mania." A nation could become temporarily insane, and the fact that Germany insisted that she had been on the defensive in 1914 indicated to Smith that she was afflicted by a "mania of persecution."⁹¹ Temporary national insanity was the only plea which would be accepted by the "Supreme Court of Civilization."

The immediate causes, particularly the diplomacy of the "Twelve Days," was enough to convince Norman Hapgood, the "muckraking" editor of Harper's Weekly, that Germany was solely responsible for World War I. The factors, a knowledge of which Hapgood felt was necessary to properly interpret the diplomacy immediately preceding the war, were as follows:

(1) Austria was not a nation but a dynasty. Her

⁹⁰Smith, pp. 210-14.

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 261-62.

foreign policy was directed toward holding the dynasty together. The murder of the heir apparent gave Austria the chance she had long awaited.

(2) Russia had made it clear after the Bosnian coup that she would not again allow a Slavic state to be humbled before the Dual Monarchy. She would have gladly accepted any compromise short of the obliteration of Serbia.

(3) The opening of the Kiel Canal doubled the effectiveness of the German fleet. Domestic troubles in Germany and growing Russian strength led German diplomats to believe that August, 1914 was psychologically the right moment to strike, despite the knowledge that Austria was ready to mediate her dispute with Russia.⁹²

Germany, Hapgood maintained, forced the war in 1914. Austria was merely her "cat's paw." Germany encouraged the insulting tone of the Austrian note to Serbia, and by the time the naive Austrian diplomats realized they had been duped, it was too late.

A slightly different, although not particularly popular, twist was applied to the events preceding the war in the Catholic World. To the author, it was perfectly evident from the terms of the ultimatum that it was framed with the intent to precipitate a war. The note merely served to substantiate the maxim that "given the choice of two courses, Austria is sure to choose the worst."⁹³

⁹²Norman Hapgood, "Who Caused the War," Harper's Weekly, LIX, No. 3011 (September 5, 1914), 221-23.

⁹³"The War in Europe," Catholic World, XCIX, No. 594 (September, 1914), 853.

The instigator of the step taken by the Catholic Dual Monarchy, according to the World's account, was Prime Minister Stephen Tisza, one of the most active Calvinists in Hungary. The German Emperor did all in his power to prevent the war. Even the Socialist journal, Vorwarts, which had been adamant in its opposition to the Crown, admitted that William II unreservedly worked for peace during the pre-war decade. In the instance of the war, the Kaiser suffered from the evil of all one-man governments--"the influence of an irresponsible back stair clique."⁹⁴ The tendency among historians undoubtedly would be to dismiss as baseless the conclusions of a denominational journal such as the World. Ironically, however, the analysis examined above more closely approximated the truth, except in reference to the pacific Count Tisza, than the more "scholarly" works by some American historians.

VI

The research of Charles Seymour⁹⁵ into the origins of the war stands out from the efforts of his contemporaries because of his multi-visioned approach to the problem of war responsibility. His methodology very closely approximated that of later scholars concerned with war

⁹⁴Catholic World, XCIX, No. 594, 855.

⁹⁵Seymour was in 1916 a professor of history at Yale University, the institution of which he later became president.

guilt in that he examined both the remote and immediate causes of the war. It was obvious, he wrote, that so great a conflagration could not arise from one assassination alone. Merely the "occasion" for the conflict, the murder was the spark which ignited the magazine; if it had not been for thirty years accumulation of powder, "there could have been no explosion."⁹⁶ The fact that Professor Seymour's conclusions did not conform to those of later scholars can be attributed in large part to the paucity of documentary evidence whereby the whole truth might be discovered. The addition of several chapters after the outbreak of the war-- the bulk of the research was completed before August, 1914-- debased the work since those additions were written with the knowledge of what the diplomacy of forty years, or what was known of it, meant in long run terms.

German pre-eminence in Europe was realized under the strong hand of the "Iron Chancellor;" German hegemony began with the creation of the Triple Alliance. What had started as military primacy with a victory over France in 1870-71 had become political primacy. In the process, however, Bismark had made the rapproachment of Russia and France inevitable since "the farthest is from Germany, the closer is to France."⁹⁷ Relatively confident that a peace conducive to her growth could be maintained, the

⁹⁶ Charles Seymour, The Diplomatic Background of the War, 1870-1914 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916), p. 1.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 44.

German nation, between 1871 and 1914, underwent an extraordinary material and moral transformation which led directly to the diplomatic crises which characterized the first decade of the twentieth century and finally led to the "Great War."⁹⁸ German economic expansion was a threat to the supremacy long held by Great Britain. Germany, which heretofore had stood in awe of her European neighbors, now entered into competition with them. When the ambitious German state arrived on the colonial scene, however, she found that most of the world had been parceled out among the other imperialistic nations, chiefly Great Britain, France and The Netherlands. Entering the imperialistic scramble rather late in the game, Germany concentrated on economic penetration in the Far East, Near East and Africa. The Near East looked particularly ripe after the Austrian rapprochement. Through Austria and Turkey, Germany hoped to open a path to Mesopotamia from where she could compete with the British position in Egypt.

This far, the Seymour thesis squared remarkably well with later historians who were blessed with considerably more evidence with which to work. Searching for what could conceivably be a reason for the "sudden" German adoption of a "bellicose attitude" in foreign policy, Seymour went awry, adding conjecture to fact. Because Germany felt the need for a political position comparable to her econ-

⁹⁸Seymour, p. 60.

omic stature, a "vague desire for power in general" gave rise to the demand in Germany for a "world empire."⁹⁹ A moral transformation permitting the erection of a new value system took place. Germany, it was felt, ought to play a part proportionate to her wealth and population, and Germans generally realized that goal could be achieved only through force. No matter how insistent or sincere might be the contention that dictates of self-preservation inspired such an attitude, Seymour argued, the German frame of mind was undeniably aggressive. Here, Seymour reverted to the popular technique of mass psycho-analysis applying statements of Nietzsche, Berhardi and Treitschke to explain German political action. His conclusions were similar to those of his colleagues who indulged in the will-o-the-wisp and equally as indefensible.

On the whole, the bellicose attitudes of the German nation were not manifested in international relations at the outset, but, despite the Kaiser's wish for peace, it was apparent that the "universal demand for expansion" in Germany would soon bring that nation into conflict with her European neighbors. Seymour absolved the Kaiser of personal responsibility for the war and indicted instead the Prussian Junkers, the capitalists and the German people in general. William II was merely the tool through which the military caste worked.

The diplomatic revolution which witnessed the Franco-

⁹⁹Seymour, p. 88.

Russian rapprochement and later Great Britain's adherence to the Triple Entente ended the Bismarkian system of "antagonize and dominate." The question to be determined was whether Germany would peaceably accept such a situation.¹⁰⁰ The altered international situation caused Germany to change her official tone from one of conciliation to one of "bellicose brutality" and resulted in the atmosphere which characterized Europe during the first decade of the twentieth century. After 1900, three quick "blows" were struck to maintain German prestige: the Kaiser's Tangiers speech in support of the Sultan, the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the dispatching of the gunboat, Panther, to Agadir on the African coast. It was a similar blow for German prestige that was largely accountable for the outbreak of World War I in 1914.¹⁰¹

After her frustration in North Africa, Germany turned anew to the Balkans where each of the major powers had an interest. For Germany, the outcome of the First Balkan War was dismal. The German-trained Turkish army had been badly beaten. Nothing would please Austria and Germany more than to have the victorious Balkan states scrap the Treaty of London and resume hostilities. The implication is that Germany goaded the Balkan states into rebuking the London settlement and resuming hostilities, an assertion which Seymour would find difficult to substantiate. Al-

¹⁰⁰Seymour, pp. 160-65.

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 169-70.

though none of the interested powers were contented with the settlement of Bucharest after the Second Balkan War, it evoked even more displeasure in the Central Powers, because the territorial gains by Serbia represented a blow both to their prestige and their Near Eastern interests.¹⁰² Austria's political and economic domination of the Balkans which, after 1908, appeared near now seemed threatened, the factor which determined the future course of the Central Powers.

By diplomacy of force, the new Serbia, which blocked German expansionist goals in the Near East, had to be paralyzed and Turkey strengthened. Bulgaria had to be dragged back under German domination and reinforced by the Macedonian provinces she failed to secure in 1913. To the Germans, a permanent league of Turkey, Bulgaria, Rumania and Greece, backed by the Central Powers, was mandatory if Pan-German aims in the Near East were to be attained.¹⁰³ Patiently, the Central Powers awaited a false move by Serbia. The assassination of the Austrian heir apparent provided a casus belli better suited to the aims of the Dual Monarchy and Germany than they could have possibly devised. The time was ripe for the permanent annihilation of Serbia and the realization of Pan-German dreams in the Balkans. Toward that end, German diplomacy of the "Twelve Days" was directed. Austria operated as

¹⁰²Seymour, p. 238.

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 242-43.

a Teutonic "cat's paw" fully assured of unlimited German cooperation after receiving the carte blanche.

Seymour contended that it was not for the historian to "anathmatize the uncompromising tone assumed by Germany in the crisis of 1914,"¹⁰⁴ but that is precisely what he did. His thesis, after June 28, 1914, does not materially differ from those of his most vindictive contemporaries. Seymour pronounced Germany guilty as charged on every count, a rather disappointing conclusion to what began as an extremely objective and scholarly piece of work. Still, in spite of its shortcomings, Seymour's analysis of the origins of the war is distinguishable from the efforts of most of his colleagues by the attention he accorded remote causes.

Although the writings of nearly every American historian and/or popular writer concerned with the subject of war responsibility between 1914 and 1920 condemned the Central Powers and defended the Entente, all American scholars were not so sure that the origins of the war could be painted in blacks and whites. One of the earliest to refuse to swallow unflinchingly the medicine offered by the Entente physicians was H. C. Mercer, a noted anthropologist and student of European diplomacy. In a letter to the editor of The Nation in 1916, Professor Mercer took issue with the cut and dried thesis propounded by Professor Turner in his "Immediate Causes of the War."

Mercer appealed to the historian to refrain from

¹⁰⁴Seymour, p. 287.

picking and choosing his evidence and to consider all of the available facts. He pointed out a few known facts that Turner "overlooked" in his indictment of Germany. Turner did not take cognizance of the so-called Westminister Telegram from Germany to her ally wherein Austria was urged to discuss her differences with Russia. Conversely, neither England nor France had pressed Russia to cease mobilization which Germany had characterized as "menacing." Austria's eleventh hour decision to discuss her differences with Russia was seen by Mercer as a direct result of the Westminister Telegram. Furthermore, Mercer charged, Turner had failed to discuss fully the Russian change from a partial to full mobilization in the face of German warnings that such an act would be considered "war-like." Neither had the Yale historian taken note of the captured diplomatic letter from Russia to Belgium telling of the French government's promise of support to Russia before Germany had made a move. The significance of other published correspondence in which England's adherence to Russia and France was intimated well in advance of the German moves on Belgium had "inadvertently" been overlooked by Turner. Lastly, Mercer asked, why had three members of the British Cabinet resigned after the English decision to go to war?¹⁰⁵

As early as 1915, George B. McClellan¹⁰⁶ refuted

¹⁰⁵H. C. Mercer, "Letter to the Editor," The Nation, CII, No. 2650 (April 13, 1916), 406-07.

¹⁰⁶McClellan was a professor in modern European history at Princeton University.

the contention that all American historians felt Germany was solely responsible for precipitating World War I. Unfortunately, McClellan wrote, because of British pre-eminence on the high seas and the cutting of the cable, many Americans had allowed themselves to be swayed by bellicose propaganda, lost their sense of proportion and assumed an open belligerency not in keeping with the American position of neutrality.¹⁰⁷ There were some "generous souls" who insisted that neutrality was cowardice, that there was a "higher duty" owed civilization. Those individuals, McClellan commented, would throw the national interest to the winds and have the United States enter on whichever side they felt was fighting for humanity. In sounding his note of caution, McClellan pointed out the folly of blaming what had happened on any one man or, for that matter, any one nation. He preferred to look to European nationalism as the principal cause of the war. The feeling then abroad in all European countries that states and nationalities must be counterminus and that races be governed as units was, McClellan contended, the real cause of the war.¹⁰⁸

The German violation of Belgium was no better nor worse than Great Britain's violation of the Portuguese

¹⁰⁷ George B. McClellan, "The War from an American Point of View," Scribners Magazine, LVII, No. 38 (March, 1915), 359.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 360.

colony of Lourenço Marques during the Boer War; both, however, were officially explained in terms tending to make "piracy" respectable. After hearing the philanthropic statements by Germany and Great Britain alike, it was, McClellan noted, refreshing to hear a Latin nation like Italy justify her imperialistic venture in Tripoli on the grounds that she simply coveted it.¹⁰⁹ Because Germany arrived on the imperialistic scene after the boundaries of Europe had been rigidly fixed, it was apparent that she would have to look beyond the confines of the continent for territorial aggrandisement. Still, McClellan contended, she "stole" less than any other modern imperialistic nation.

The events of 1914 rudely demolished the dreams of many observers of the European scene. It had been widely felt that a new era of internationalism had dawned. Now, it became apparent that twenty-five years of internationalism was due to the force of economic necessity, not to the call of human brotherhood. In the same way, the opposing alliance systems were born. It was as absurd to assume that the powers grouped themselves into alliances because of international sympathies as it was to assume that either of the great alliances came into existence purely as "protective forces."¹¹⁰ Economic rivalry with Germany was the motivation behind England's entrance into the Triple Entente,

¹⁰⁹McClellan, Scribners Magazine, LVII, No. 38, 361.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 363.

while La Révanche, the French watchword since 1871, prompted France in the same direction. Russia's insistence on placing herself at the head of the world's Slavic peoples, implying a crushing of the Dual Monarchy, impelled Russia to take the course of Great Britain and France.

The charge of militarism, McClellan contended, laid with equal force against all of the belligerents. All nations, by 1914, were approaching the point where only two alternatives were open--war or disarmament. Since the national hatreds of the powers went too deep to permit the latter, it was merely a question of who would strike first. The conflagration might have been prevented in 1914, but it was "inevitable" eventually as the product of the spirit of nationality which had ruled Europe for a full century.¹¹¹

By 1917, the appearance of T. Lothrop Stoddard's Present Day Europe; Its National States of Mind gave indications that revisionist sentiment had already begun to take hold among a minority of American scholars. The trend which started with McClellan and Stoddard,¹¹² however, did not manifest itself in a majority of American historians until the fourth decade of the century, but it is interesting to note what Stoddard did with the same body of facts his contemporaries almost unanimously used to indict Germany. For the point of view expressed in his book, Stoddard might well be labeled the first American

¹¹¹McClellan, Scribners Magazine, LVII, No. 38, 364.

¹¹²Professor in modern European history at Harvard.

revisionist on the causes of World War I.

Germany, he wrote, felt she was fighting to save the European heritage from Asiatic barbarism. When England joined Russia, it was the vilest treachery to the cause of civilization, since inside Germany, the war was viewed as a German-Russian conflict. England, the Germans felt, was not only fighting on the side of barbarism but also on the side of moral injustice--unjust because Russia had begun the war to prevent "a thorough expiation of a wretched murder."¹¹³ Serbia was viewed by Germans as a Russian "cat's paw" of Pan-Slavism which epitomized the lust for world domination. To Stoddard must be given the distinction of presenting the first unbiased appraisal of German public opinion, and how it viewed the war.

Striking the note upon which scores of American historians in the next two decades were to launch their studies, Stowell argued it was absurd to assign Europe's ills to a single cause such as secret diplomacy, Prussian militarism, British navalism or Pan-Slavism and then "verbally demolish this poor bogey with the announcement of the advent of the Golden Age." The cataclysm was not the work of any man or set of men. Its substance was the inexorable legacy of the past.¹¹⁴

The intention in this chapter has not been to examine

¹¹³T. Lothrop Stoddard, Present Day Europe; Its National States of Mind (New York: The Century Co., 1917), p. 77.

¹¹⁴Ibid., pp. 311-16.

the works of all writers publishing between 1914 and 1920 who concerned themselves with the origins of the "Great War." Selections were made because they appear representative of the various approaches to the problem posed by war responsibility. Moreover, each of the authors considered above seems to have exerted a marked influence upon his contemporaries.

Obviously, a chronological dividing line cannot be sharply drawn in a study of this sort whereby all historians or scholars belonging to one "school" will fall on one side of the line and all those propounding another interpretation on the opposite side. The year 1920 was selected as a dividing point, not because there was a complete break with scholars of the previous decade in that year, but because works commonly referred to as "revisionist" appeared more often after 1920. There were American historians whose views on war responsibility were never materially affected by the publication of the post-war diplomatic collections. On the other hand, the so-called revisionists began publishing before 1920, despite the fact that the documents necessary to re-evaluate the earlier historical interpretations remained hidden in the national repositories of Europe.

Because of a scarcity of documentary evidence whereby the whole story might be told and a decided affinity among American war guilt scholars after 1917 to place their patriotic duty above intellectual responsibility, the theses

of early writers investigating the origins of World War I varied only in approach. Almost to a man the American historical profession, seconded by popular writers and pseudo-historians, rose to proclaim Germany guilty of precipitating a tragedy unequalled in the annals of human history.

With Europe aflame, the learned professors constructed a basic text, although the more imaginative among them applied a few novel twists. The growth of Germany was predicated on diabolical ambition, the intellectual prophets for which were Frederick the Great, Nietzsche and Treitschke. After 1871, Germany secretly and carefully had plotted a war, the first step toward world dominion. Austria was held under the German thumb, and the Sarajevo incident served as an excuse for the German blood bath. The fatal decision that the long-awaited moment had arrived was made at Potsdam July 5, 1914. After that date, Germany opposed all offers of mediation and pushed her "cat's paw" closer to the abyss where a fall would produce Armageddon--the battleground where good, the Entente, and evil, the Central Powers, would meet at last to determine the fate of mankind.

Because Germany refused all offers to mediate and consistently frustrated the offers of the peacemakers, Sazonov and Lord Grey, she was guilty before the "Supreme Court of Civilization." World War I was the product of German ambition, and because of this, responsibility for the holocaust rested solely upon her shoulders.

CHAPTER III

REVELATIONS BEARING ON THE ORIGINS OF THE WAR, 1917-1930

In 1925, a movement backed by prominent British citizens, including George Peabody Gooch, H. G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw and Maynard Keynes, was launched to delete Article 231, the "war guilt clause," from the Treaty of Versailles. Although the motives of those supporting the movement differed, the British scholars were unanimous in their belief that the document constituted an insuperable barrier to international understanding. Keynes might feel the need for revision on the ground that the treaty was economically unrealistic, while Gooch could sincerely believe that Germany was wronged by the guilty appellation hung on her at Versailles.

The reaction against the terms imposed by the victors in 1919 was not confined, however, to Great Britain but was felt in each of the erstwhile belligerent nations. The rapid change in sentiment among some of the world's leading scholars was attributable to the revolutionary upheavals in Germany, Austria and Russia. In repudiation of the wartime regimes, the new socialist governments threw open their national archives in hopes that the world's historians might find some basis in the secret documents for placing responsibility for the recent con-

flict on the previous capitalist governments.

The new evidence convinced a minority of American historians that the blacks and whites painted by the Entente propagandists were at best gradations of grey. Scholars who had retained their sense of balance during the war aligned themselves with others who had recovered from the patriotic binge and began a systematic study of the documentary evidence bearing on the war's origins. In contrast to the tremendous job of "popular scholarship"¹ during the war, the research done after the war constituted "one of the most remarkable examples of productive scholarship in a century."² A closer examination of the new documentary material upon which American historians studying the problem of war responsibility were to rely increasingly is in order. Until World War I, it had been the practice to keep the diplomatic records relating to the origins of wars under wraps for as long as fifty years. In 1914, the documents concerning the Franco-Prussian War had not yet been fully published. But this was not 1870, and the first hint of what was to come appeared in print less than one year after the outbreak of hostilities. The Belgian archives were seized by Germany and extracts published under the editor-

¹William T. Hutchinson, "The American Historian in Wartime," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXIX, No. 2 (September, 1942), 163-86.

²Harry Elmer Barnes, A History of Historical Writing (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938), p. 280.

ship of Bernhard Schwertfeger.³ Entente historians, however, were wont to dismiss the findings of Schwertfeger until it was found that much in the captured Belgian documents was substantiated by the state papers from other national repositories.

In 1919, the Austrian and German governments each published a collection of documents bearing on the crisis of 1914.⁴ J. Lepsius, A. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and Friedrich Thimme, in 1922, collaborated in editing the German documents on the period 1871-1914 under the now famous title, Grosse Politik.⁵

In the same year, a more complete collection was published under the auspices of the Carnegie Endowment entitled Official German Documents Relating to the World

³Belgische Aktenstücke 1905-1914 Berichte der belgischen Vertreter in Berlin, London und Paris an den Minister des Aussern in Brüssel. Ed. by Bernhard Schwertfeger. Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte m.b.h., 1915.

⁴Austrian Red Book. Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Vorgeschichte des Krieges, 1914. Ed. by Roderich Gooss. 2 vols. Vienna: L. W. Seidel & Co., 1919.

Germany. Die deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch. 4 Vols. Charlottenburg: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte m.b.h., 1919. Coll. by Karl Kautsky. Eng. ed. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Outbreak of the World War, German Documents Collected by Karl Kautsky. New York: Oxford University Press. 1924.

⁵Germany. Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914, Sammlung der Akten des Deutschen Auswärtigen Amtes. Ed. by J. Lepsius, A. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and Friedrich Thimme. 40 vols. Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte m.b.h., 1922-27.

War.⁶ This tremendous example of cooperative scholarship required the collective efforts of scores of historians. It included: the testimony of Germans from all walks of life before a committee appointed by the post-war German government to investigate the war guilt problem; records of the reaction in Germany to President Wilson's peace note of 1916; and documents relating to negotiations between Germany and the United States concerning the submarine problem.

After the Austrian archives were opened to scholars, Professor A. F. Pribram of Harvard published his extractions under the title, The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary, 1879-1914.⁷ Later, two Austrian scholars, Ludwig Bittner and Hans Webersberger, published on behalf of the government an eight volume collection of the documents bearing on the years, 1908-1913, which threw new light on Austro-Serbian and Austro-Russian relations.⁸

Russia was the first of the former Allied powers to open her archives. The Bolshevik government never did undertake a systematic publication of all documents

⁶ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Official German Documents Relating to the World War, 2 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 1923.

⁷ A. F. Pribram, The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920-1921.

⁸ Austria. Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von der bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914. Diplomatische Akenstücke des österreichisch-ungarischen Ministeriums des Aussern. Ed. by L. Bittner and Hans Webersberger. 8 vols. Vienna: A. Holzhausen, 1930.

relating to the origins of the war, but in the winter of 1917-1918, the Soviets published the so-called "Secret Treaties of the Entente" in Pravda exploding the hypothesis that idealism had been the motivating factor behind Allied actions in 1914.⁹ Later, the Russian revelations were thoroughly analyzed by a number of American scholars including Ray Stannard Baker.¹⁰ To the "Secret Treaties," the Soviet government added in 1922 a massive collection of Materials for the Study of Franco-Russian Relations from 1910-1914.¹¹ In the early 1920's French and German scholars, notably René Marchand, Émile Laloy¹² and Friederich Stieve, gained access to the Russian archives. From the pen of the latter came a multi-volume edition of Russian documents and secondary sources like his Isvolsky and the World War.¹³

⁹The "Secret Treaties" were rearranged and translated into German in Dokumente aus den russischen Geheimarchiven Soveit sie bis zum Juli 1918 Eingegangen Sind. Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für politik und Geschichte m.b.h., 1918.

¹⁰Ray Stannard Baker (ed.), Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters, 8 vols. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1927-1939.

¹¹Materialy po Istorii Franko-Russkikh Otnoscenni za 1910-1914. Moscow, 1922.

¹²Émile Laloy, Les documents secrets des Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères de Russie. Paris: Editions Bossard, 1919.

Un Livre Noir: Diplomatie d'avant-Guerre d'après les Documents des Archives Russes, 1910-1914. Ed. by René Marchand. 2 vols. Paris: Librairie du travail, 1922-23.

¹³Isvolsky. Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel Iswolskis 1911-1914. Aus den Geheimakten der russischen Staatsarchive. Ed. by Friedrich Stieve. 4 Vols. Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte m.b.h., 1924.

Friedrich Stieve, Isvolsky and the World War. Trans. E. W. Dickes. London: G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1926.

Besides the official work done in the Russian archives, the Siebert papers,¹⁴ which purported to be duplicates of official dispatches between London and St. Petersburg copied by the wartime secretary of the Russian embassy in London, fell into the hands of German scholars and were published. They were later edited anew by the English scholars, Temperley and Gooch, in the British documentary collection.¹⁵

At the outset, neither the French nor English governments opened its archives to the scrutiny of the world's scholars, but the publication of the secret Russian documents exposed the wartime French Yellow Book¹⁶ for what it was--the most seriously distorted of all the official apologies issued during the war.¹⁷ The new documentary evidence gave scholars a start toward checking the validity of the official wartime statements. One of the earliest studies of this sort was undertaken by a German scholar, von Romberg, whose work, The Falsifications of the Russian Orange Book,¹⁸ included the pre-war diplomatic exchanges

¹⁴Benno von Siebert, Diplomatische Aktenstu zur Geschichte der Entente-politik der Vorkriegsjahre. 2 vols. Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte m.b.h., 1921.

¹⁵British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Ed. by G. P. Gooch and Harold W. V. Temperley. 11 vols. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1926-1938.

¹⁶France. Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. La guerre européenne. Documents diplomatiques 1914. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1914.

¹⁷Barnes, A History of ..., p. 282.

¹⁸Die Fälschungen des russischen Orangebuches, Herausgegeben von Freiherrn G. von Romberg. Berlin & Leipzig, 1922.

between St. Petersburg and Paris and laid bare many of the suppressions in the earlier Russian apology.

Despite the widely heard charge that the revelations were simply German and Bolshevik propaganda, the veracity of the newly-published documentary evidence was creditably enhanced when it was recognized that the new releases attempted to discredit wartime governments. The authenticity of the Russian papers was then acknowledged by Sazonov, Russian foreign minister under Tsar Nicholas, in the introduction to How the War Began¹⁹ published in the early 1920's. Harry E. Barnes wrote categorically in 1926 that no historian who gave the new evidence a thorough examination had failed to become converted to the revisionist position on the origins of the war.²⁰ This, however, was somewhat of an overstatement as shall be pointed out later.

In 1928, the French government belatedly agreed to publish the documents of its foreign office concerning the war's beginnings, but the historians appointed to the official editorial committee included none of the revisionist stamp, indicating the possibility of government suppression. In 1929, however, the first volume appeared and proved to be far superior to earlier

¹⁹How the War Began. The Diary of Baron Schilling, Chief of the Chancellery of the Russian Foreign Office. London, 1925.

²⁰Harry Elmer Barnes, The Genesis of the World War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), p. 661.

French collections.²¹ Beginning in 1926, Gooch and Temperley began to systematically edit the eleven volume British documents, a process which was not completed until 1938. Adding to the flood of new evidence, many of the principal statesmen of the period in which the seeds for World War I were sown published their memoirs or letters. The ambiguities and inaccuracies in the reminiscences of men like von Tirpitz, Sazonov, Poincaré, Asquith, Grey and Isvolsky were clarified after historians began to interview the participants in the drama of 1914.

German historians, quite naturally, were the first to approach the war guilt problem scholarly and critically. The first post-war research into German diplomacy was that by Erich Brandenburg. Stieve, as indicated above, studied the Isvolsky-Poincaré exchanges, and Herman Lutz undertook a study of English diplomacy. Theodore Wolff's The Eve of 1914 considered the pre-war diplomacy of all nations involved in the war and was one of the first comprehensive treatments of the war's origins. The culmination came in Max Montgelas' The Case for the Central Powers,²²

²¹France. Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. Commission de publication des documents relatif aux origines de la guerre de 1914. Documents diplomatiques français (1871-1914). Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1929.

²²Erich Brandenburg, Von Bismark zum Welkreige. Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte m.b.h., 1924.

Herman Lutz, Lord Grey un der Weltkrieg. Berlin, 1927.

Max Montgelas, The Case for the Central Powers. London: G. Allen & Urwin, Ltd., 1925.

described by Professor Fay as "generally acknowledged by competent scholars [in the 1920's] as the ablest...volume on war responsibility."²³

In France and England, the only major belligerents whose governments were left unscathed by the post-war revolutions, professional historians were rather slow to accept the revisionist view. A notable exception in France was Pierre Renouvin who, in his Immediate Origins of the War,²⁴ adopted the new interpretation. Before the 1930's dissemination of the revisionist thesis in France and England was largely left to journalists and former diplomats such as Georges Demartial. Sir Robert T. Reid's How the War Came²⁵ in 1919 first stated the British revisionist view. He was later joined by Sir Phillip Gibbs, a moderate proponent of revisionism, and G. P. Gooch. In Russia, outstanding service on behalf of the new interpretation of the war's origins was rendered by E. A. Adamov and Pokrovsky, while Barbagallo first presented the new position of Italian historians.²⁶

²³Barnes, The Genesis of..., p. 662.

²⁴Pierre Renouvin, The Immediate Origins of the War (28 June-4 August, 1914). New Haven: Yale University Press, 1928.

²⁵Georges Demartial, L'Évangile du Quai d'Orsay. Paris, 1926.

Robert T. Reid (Lord Loreburn), How the War Came. London: Methuen & Co., 1919.

²⁶E. A. Adamov, Razdel Aziatskoe Turtsii. (Partition of Asiatic Turkey.) Moscow, 1924.

M. Pokrovsky, Das Zaristische Russland im Weltkrieg. Berlin, 1927.

Corrado Barbagallo, Come si la Guerre mondiale. Milan: Albrighi, Segati & Co., 1923.

Never before in the history of historiography had there been so rapid and complete a conversion in historical attitudes. A few scholars, of course, had never accepted Allied propaganda at face value, but their views very largely rested on intuition, not documentary evidence. The post-war revelations would have been of little practical value had it not been for assimilators like Sidney Bradshaw Fay who, as early as 1920, had absorbed what little material there was available and aroused attention by his articles in the American Historical Review. Fay sounded the note upon which numerous American historians in the following decades wrote. On the basis of the Austrian Red Book and Kautsky collection, he exploded the myth that the Dual Monarchy was Germany's "cat's paw" in 1914. Still, it is significant that Fay argued the new evidence did not exonerate Germany of principal responsibility in precipitating the conflict. In 1920, Fay, like most of his colleagues, accepted the Morgenthau version of the Potsdam Crown Council.²⁷ Devoted to an attack on the official Russian apology, Fay's second article revealed the real war aims. However, he concluded that Russia was justified in aiding Serbia in view of the German carte blanche to Austria.

That Fay had not been completely won over to the revisionist position is obvious in his earliest work on

²⁷ Sidney B. Fay, "New Light on the Origins of the War," American Historical Review, XXVI, No. 1 (October, 1920), 37.

on war responsibility. A comparison of Fay during the war years with the Fay of 1930 is a study of the evolving revisionist. During the war, he had been instrumental in the application of revisionism, but not to the origins of the war. While some American historians had refrained from writing on the background of the war during the conflict, few practiced the cold objectivity which characterized the previous decade. The United States entry in 1917 brought a new emphasis on national history and a revision of the history of Anglo-American and Franco-American relations so that the Allies appeared in the most favorable light possible. In this, the wartime brand of revisionism, S. B. Fay was an eager contributor.²⁸ His evolution toward the new interpretation was apparent from his comments on Henry H. Asquith's The Genesis of the War. Fay took the opportunity to censure the British government for its refusal to open its archives to scholars with the suggestion that its wartime position had not been as defensible as had previously been believed.²⁹ By 1928, the year Fay's two volume work on the background of the war appeared, the conversion was complete--Fay was America's leading revisionist.

Harry E. Barnes, the most uncompromising of all

²⁸Mathew A. Fitzsimons, Alfred G. Pandt and Charles E. Novell (eds.), Development of Historiography (Harrisburg: The Stackpole Co., 1954), p. 420.

²⁹S. B. Fay, Review of The Genesis of the War, by Henry H. Asquith, The New Republic, XXXVII, No. 474 (January 2, 1924), 154.

American proponents of the new interpretation, represents another case study in revisionist evolution. Even he, who in the 1920's was never considered a "friend" to Great Britain, engaged in activities sponsored by the Creel Committee. In 1918, he wrote that there was surprisingly little in the preliminaries or the events of the American Revolution that should cause permanent animosities.³⁰

After the war, Barnes, like many of his contemporaries reconsidered, but in his case, the reversal was more astonishing. So complete was his conversion to revisionism that he was believed by his colleagues in the American Historical Association "to be in receipt of a retainer of \$100,000 a year from the ex-Kaiser."³¹

To illustrate how one historian's temperament changed over the course of nine years, one has only to compare two statements by Barnes concerning the German Crown Prince. The first appeared in a 1917 National Security League pamphlet and referred to the Crown Prince as "semi-imbecile."³² The second statement appeared in a 1926 edition of The Nation describing the same Crown Prince:

During the war we became so habituated to reproductions of the Crown Prince as a rabbit-faced imbecile with an IQ of 20 that few Americans were capable of imagining him as possessed of the slightest cerebration...It

³⁰Hutchinson, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXIX, No. 2, 175.

³¹C. Hartley Grattan, "The Historian Cut Loose," The American Mercury, XI, No. 44 (August, 1927), 430.

³²Ibid., p. 426.

was with astonishment we were to find in his memoirs...the most attractive and plausible apology which emerged from the German official class after the war...³³

While Barnes and Fay each developed into his own "brand" of revisionism, other American scholars made the leap more abruptly. These pathfinders included Frederick Bausman, William L. Langer and Albert J. Nock.³⁴ With the blast at the 1914 theory of war responsibility, American scholars also levelled their guns at the accepted version of the United States entry into "Europe's War." C. H. Grattan and Walter Millis were notable among many who dealt with this question to some extent, but it remained until 1938 and the work of Charles Tansill, an assimilator the equal of Fay, that all aspects of the problem were satisfactorily explored.³⁵

³³H. E. Barnes, "The Crown Prince as Archivist," The Nation, CXXII, No. 3188 (August 11, 1926), 131.

³⁴Bausman's Let France Explain. London: G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1922 was the first comprehensive American attack on the Entente apologies.

Langer's early writings on war responsibility included: "The European Powers and the French Occupation of Tunis," American Historical Review, XXVI, No. 1 (October, 1925) and "The Franco-Russian Alliance," Slavonic Review, III, IV, (March-June, 1925).

Nock's Myth of a Guilty Nation represented one of the initial American efforts to expose the fallacy in holding any one nation responsible for the war. See below.

³⁵C. H. Grattan, Why We Fought. New York: The Vanguard Press, 1929.

Walter Millis, The Road to War, America, 1914-1917. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1935.

Charles Tansill, America Goes to War. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1938.

In reviewing Barnes' The Genesis of the World War, Professor Chevalier Hazen wrote that if the author's contentions were sound, Theodore Roosevelt, President Wilson Elihu Root and Ambassador Page had all been wrong, a proposition few American historians were prepared to accept.³⁶ Hazen was not alone; many American scholars in the 1920's displayed a decided obstinacy to retreat from the antiquated wartime version of responsibility. There are a number of reasons for the aversion generally among historians toward accepting the revisionist view even after it had been substantiated by documentary evidence. Perhaps the most important reason was that in some cases the proponents of the "sole German war guilt" theory had acted as technical advisers to those who framed the post-war treaties. A paternalistic feeling toward the treaties for which their scholarship had provided a basis compelled most American historians along a conservative course.

That wartime biases among historians were slow in dying was illustrated by a 1937 ruckus on the campus of Yale University. In that year, Professor Jerome Davis, an exponent of the Fay thesis on the war's origins, was involuntarily retired for his conduct of European history classes. In the same year, Charles Seymour, a technical adviser to President Wilson at Versailles who had never accepted the revisionist interpretation, became

³⁶Grattan, The American Mercury, XI, No. 44, 430.

president.³⁷

During the 1920's and 1930's, American historians writing on war responsibility could be divided into three separate categories.³⁸ The first division, variously called "bitter-enders" or "die-hards," included those historians who persisted in upholding the wartime thesis of the war's origins in spite of evidence to the contrary. Among the more illustrious of this group were Hazen, William Stearns Davis and Carleton J. H. Hayes. A second classification of American scholars was the "salvager" who cited the latest documentary evidence but clung to the view that Germany was primarily responsible in 1914. This group included Bernadotte Schmitt, Charles Seymour and Raymond Turner, among others.

The third group--the revisionists--were those scholars whose work represented sincere attempts, on the basis of the latest evidence, to modify the obsolete wartime view of responsibility. It is incorrect to associate these men with economists like Keynes who felt the Versailles Treaty needed revision because it was economically unsound or with the "debunkers" of the 1920's who often wrote in that fashion simply because that was the type of literature the public demanded. The American revisionists logically fall into two sub-divisions: those who favored a divided responsibility, including Fay and Ferdinand

³⁷Barnes, A History of..., p. 287.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 288-89.

Schevill, and those who held the more uncompromising view that neither of the Central Powers were guilty in 1914. Although the rabid revisionists admitted Germany and Austria displayed no great dexterity in 1914, they maintained that neither power wished a European war. Furthermore, they argued, the military responsibility for the war lay with Russia and moral responsibility with Russia and France collectively. Advocating such an interpretation in the United States were Harry E. Barnes, Frederick Bausman and William L. Langer.

In the ensuing paragraphs, the interpretations assigned to the events surrounding the outbreak of the European hostilities by representatives of each of the foregoing categories will be examined. While that "school" of American war guilt scholars most commonly labeled revisionist grew consistently in the 1920's, all learned historians were not converted to the new interpretation as Professor Barnes would have his reader believe. Real inroads were made into the ranks of the proponents of the "sole German war guilt" thesis in the two decades following the war until by 1935, most American historians writing on the origins of the war favored a divided responsibility. No longer was the controversy concerned with the "guilt" of this or that nation. As much as the debate still existed, it was concerned with the "relative responsibility" of each of the belligerents.

CHAPTER IV

ORIGINS OF WORLD WAR I AS VIEWED BY AMERICAN HISTORIANS AFTER 1920

I

Contrary to Professor Barnes' assertion that all American historians worthy of the name had, by the mid-twenties, accepted the revisionist interpretation of the war's beginnings, C. M. Babcock wrote that only one of every ten had evolved to that point of view by 1930. Increasing numbers, he added, were moving in that direction influenced by Fay's well-reasoned account.¹ While there are several feasible explanations for the conservative stand taken by most American historians after the war, Professor A. B. Hart's attitude probably exemplified that of most Americans. His resistance was based upon the fact that to accept the revisionist interpretation of the background of the war, one had to admit that the American people had erred in 1917.²

Needless to say, this is hardly the reaction one would expect from a scholar in the face of empirical evidence to the contrary, but it is illustrative of the type of biases with which the contemporary historian must

¹C. M. Babcock, "Pedagogues Stand Pat," The American Mercury, XIX, No. 75 (March, 1930), 290.

²Ibid., p. 290.

cope before he can see events in their true perspective. The prejudices of the post-war American historian were demonstrated whenever there was a comparison to be drawn between one of the Entente powers and Germany. If the British maintained the world's largest fleet, that represented a force for peace. But when Germany attempted to redress the naval balance, the Anglo-Saxon historian cried, "War!" Great Britain might make military agreements, and, as Sir Edward Grey said, they were not binding, but a similar Austro-German agreement was immediately labeled a "plot." In essence, the problem facing American scholars interested in discovering the real causes of the war was one of rising above national prejudices and pride and of considering the evidence relating to the war's origins with an open mind. This, American historians, who had so patriotically fought the war of words on the home front, were unwilling or unable to do.

Not only were many American historians as individuals incapable of rising above hatreds and biases engendered by wartime propaganda, but also many of the so-called scholarly journals, or their editors, refused to acknowledge that there were two sides to the story of war responsibility. A few periodicals were noteworthy in opening their columns to "salvagers" and revisionists alike. Among these were the American Historical Review, Current History, The Nation and The New Republic. Periodicals like Foreign Affairs and the Journal of Modern History, under the editorship of Professor

Bernadotte E. Schmitt, were careful that only the "right" kind of copy appeared in their columns. In answer to his critics, Schmitt maintained throughout the 1920's that all he had to say on the background of the war would be said in his book which was belatedly published in 1930. In the interim, contributors to his journal closed their eyes to recently uncovered evidence and wrote disparagingly of those who entertained revisionist thoughts.

Compared to their European counterparts, American historians generally were rather slow to adopt a more objective and realistic view towards the origins of the war. Although the wartime diplomats--Grey, Poincaré, Lloyd George, Churchill and Sasonov--admitted in their memoirs that Germany had not "plotted" the war, conservative American scholars preferred to look to professional apologists like the British Serbophile, Seton-Watson, for evidence to reinforce their theses. These then were the diehards, or, as Professor Barnes labeled them, the "bitter-enders," who clung to the Entente guilt thesis long after it had been invalidated by historical scholarship. Most of these men could see no apparent contradiction in the stand they assumed, because the revelations from the European archives were conveniently disavowed as Bolshevik or "radical" propaganda. This faction, which fortunately did not constitute a majority of American historians, cited pre-war evidence to substantiate the interpretations they applied to the origins of the war. They were led by authors

who contributed so eagerly to the "Entente myth" during the war years--Charles D. Hazen, Raymond Turner, Albert H. Putney and William Stearns Davis. The stand-pat "school" of professional historians was joined by ex-diplomats from the Wilson administration like the former secretary of state, Robert Lansing, and the wartime Anglophile ambassador to England, Walter Hines Page.

In his Europe Since 1815, a revised edition published in 1923, Charles D. Hazen ignored the bulk of the post-war scholarship on European diplomacy. Instead, he referred his reader to Charles Seymour's The Diplomatic Background of the War and The Roots of the War by William S. Davis, both of which had been rendered obsolete by the latest evidence from the European archives. It is noteworthy that Professor Hazen used none of the new documentary disclosures which might have tended to refute his thesis, which was materially unchanged from his 1910 edition, except that in the later work he was more harsh with the Central Powers. Writings by revisionist scholars were evidently inserted in his bibliography to lend an air of objectivity to the Columbia professor's work. Had Hazen heeded the findings of either Fay or Gooch, both listed as sources, his statements relating to the war's beginnings could not have been made with such certainty.

After a "careful" examination of the diplomatic records pertaining to the origins of the war, Hazen concluded that the German nation had consistently provoked

her European neighbors with an eye toward war. The realization of German hopes came in 1914, and because of the carte blanche to Austria, tendered with open eyes as to what the consequences would be, Germany incurred the moral responsibility for the war.³ Furthermore, her dispatch ordering a halt to Russian mobilization turned an Austro-Serbian quarrel into a European conflagration and made certain that Germany would shoulder also the political responsibility for the war.

The opinion of the outside world, Hazen wrote, had already been "overwhelmingly expressed," and the post-war disclosures gave no reason for a change in that opinion. To those historians who favored a divided responsibility, feeling all European nations contributed to the creation of the conditions in which the war arose, Hazen replied, imperialisms "do not clash of themselves. They are not impersonal forces subject to no human control."⁴ The implication, of course, is that German deliberately conspired to create conditions in which the "imperialisms" might easily clash.

The history of Europe from 1871 until 1914 showed that friction did not necessarily mean war, that it was possible to keep the peace if nations and the individuals directing national policies desired peace. Had Germany

³Charles D. Hazen, Europe Since 1815 (2d ed. rev.; New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1923), p. 657.

⁴Ibid., p. 666.

and Austria been willing to do what they had done in the past, Hazen contended, there would have been no war in 1914. "But...[Germany and Austria] showed no penchant for such a procedure [arbitration]. Quite the contrary,...and war resulted."⁵ The "sinister and brutal" challenge of Austria and Germany was accepted by those who had done their utmost to prevent hostilities. That the contest was not merely a material one, but that the "most previous moral and spiritual interests" were involved was clearly seen and stated at the outset by the Entente statesmen, Hazen wrote emulating the best of the wartime propagandists. Had the author referred to all of the works listed in his bibliography, such an interpretation would have been very unlikely. The student is left with the impression that, far from surveying all of the evidence available in 1923, Hazen restricted himself solely to those works published before 1919.

Hazen's colleague at Columbia, Carleton J. H. Hayes, applied an antiquated interpretation to the immediate causes of the war, but, unlike Hazen, he blamed the remote causes on an "international anarchy." In pre-war Europe, Hayes wrote in an analysis not unlike the revisionists, self-interest was the dominant note. By June, 1914, that self-interest had degenerated into cynical selfishness. This, according to Hayes, was a direct result of the spirit of nationalism, a hang-over from the French Revolution.

⁵Hazen, p. 667.

Instead of producing a sort of internationalism under which each of the states of Europe might live peaceably, the new phenomena emphasized the exclusiveness of each state. The spirit of nationalism fostered both political and economic anarchy. "Modern imperialism became an arc on the circle of exclusive nationalism."⁶ It was a vicious circle and the only way of breaking it was through war.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Hayes contended, nationalism, imperialism and militarism had walked forward hand in hand. The chances for peace were small in a world where every state was characterized a "power" and those whose armor was thickest, "great powers." The war's underlying cause was international anarchy. "Its stakes were the perpetuation or destruction of that anarchy."⁷ To this point, Hayes had no quarrel with the revisionists. His interpretation of the underlying causes, though perhaps over-simplified, was not unlike that assigned to the remote causes by Fay seven years later. It was with the immediate causes that Hayes and the revisionists parted company.

Since Germany, according to Hayes, was the most perfect example of imperialism and militarism, she was the most anarchic. It followed that she was the most responsible for the war. By 1914, German militarism had

⁶Carleton J. H. Hayes, A Brief History of the Great War (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1921), p. 4.

⁷Ibid., p. 7

achieved the highest place in the state. The successes of Prussia between 1863 and 1871 had sanctioned the union of nationalism and militarism. The instruments of the militarists were the united capitalists and Junkers.

The Junkers were now serving the capitalists the the capitalists were honoring the Junkers. The promise to 'obey' was left out of the covenant, for both contracting parties had freely given that pledge to the high priest who solemnized the nuptials--the Kaiser himself.⁸

After blaming the war fundamentally on an "international anarchy," Hayes placed at Germany's door the responsibility for events ranging from the Russo-Japanese War to the Balkan hostilities. From 1895 to 1914, Germany pursued a "bluff" policy in order that her "place in the sun" might be attained. While German diplomats shook their fists in the collective face of the European family of nations, the German people, Hayes surmised, were coming more and more under the "psychology of suggestion." Russia was menacing; France was vengeful; and Great Britain was jealous. When the three nations drew together, the German professors of suggestive psychology began to exploit the words, "encirclement" and "preventive war." By 1914, Germany was ready, and her class of Junkers and capitalists were willing and able to precipitate the war.⁹

Published two years earlier than the Hazen volume, Hayes' position on the war's origins was, in a sense, more

⁸ Hayes, pp. 10-12.

⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

defensible than that of his colleague. In 1921, the new documentary evidence was rather meagre. What there was, however, if carefully studied, would have refuted the Hayes contentions. The sources upon which he constructed his diatribe against Germany are alone enough to reflect unfavorably on the work. Among the more illustrious of the authors upon whom Hayes relied for information to convict the Central Powers were Morgenthau, Lichnowsky, Chitwood, Stowell, Gerard, Hill, Gauss and Stoddard. Not once in the entire course of his volume did Hayes convey the impression that he was aware there had been any investigation into the background of the war since the cessation of hostilities. The works of the Columbia professors are merely illustrative of the product of ultra-conservative American historians. In the latter 1920's, it is noteworthy that fewer and fewer books appeared expounding the wartime guilt thesis. The barrage against the revisionist historians continued to be sure, but, unable to refute the new interpretations generally, the die-hard writers contented themselves in finding fault in the particulars of the revisionist position.

Raymond Turner was one of those who led the rear guard fight against a general acceptance of the new interpretation of war responsibility. In 1927, the John Hopkins professor wrote an article entitled "German War Guilt Reaffirmed" in which he set forth a hypothesis later

expanded upon in his Europe Since 1870.¹⁰ In his Current History article, Turner attacked the revisionists in general and Fay in particular. Fay, he charged, demonstrated an increasing tendency to lean to the side of Germany wherever possible. The new interpretation rested on sentiment, not facts. The latest evidence, Turner contended, corroborated the wartime view that Germany and Germany alone was responsible for the war.

Everywhere, Turner wrote, "Germans, radicals and others" declared again and again that the Treaty of Versailles was a grievous error--that Germany was not solely responsible.¹¹ A discussion of the type of mentality which traditionally has hung the "radical" appellation upon those who might deviate from their personal belief is beyond the scope of this study, but Turner's German-radical combination is perhaps worth noting. He accepted the view that Germany was not solely guilty for creating the conditions which prevailed in pre-war Europe, but argued that she still could be held "guilty" in precipitating the war in 1914. In other words, he accepted the revisionist position that there were many indirect causes of the war for which Germany could not be held responsible. For the war in 1914, however, German responsibility was "with justice primarily assigned."¹²

¹⁰Raymond Turner, Europe Since 1870. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Co.), 1927.

¹¹Raymond Turner, "German War Guilt Reaffirmed," Current History, XXV, No. 5 (February, 1927), 649.

¹²Ibid., p. 649.

The revisionist perspective on the importance of remote causes, Professor Turner argued, was faulty. It was the immediate causes--the events between June 28 and August 1, 1914--which were of prime importance, and in 1914, there was no doubt that Germany had given to her ally a "blank check" and encouraged the Dual Monarchy to declare war on Serbia. Furthermore, it could "never be denied that the "Great War" began with the German declaration of war on Russia and France."¹³ From the outset, Germany and Austria "knew" that a general European war would follow the actions they took, and they abated not one instant in improvising measures designed to secure their own selfish ends. Because mobilization did not mean war in international law, Russian mobilization did not precipitate World War I. There was always the possibility of averting war so long as it remained undeclared;¹⁴ Germany threw peace to the winds when she declared war on Russia.

Turner erroneously argued that no scholar ever charged one nation or people with sole responsibility for bringing on the war. That there were many underlying causes which made the war probable in 1914 was not at all the point. The question to be resolved laid in the immediate causes for which two nations, Germany and Austria, were responsible. For her action in attacking Serbia, Austria assumed a large part of the blame. The Dual

¹³Turner, Current History, XXV, No. 5, 650.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 654.

Monarchy, however, would not have gone as far as she did had it not been for the Potsdam pledges. Because the greater conflict began with the German declaration of war on Russia and France, immediate responsibility--that with which the "sincere" scholar should be concerned--"lies properly with the German Empire."¹⁵

In a later article, Turner uncovered what he termed "New Evidence Corroborating Ambassador Morgenthau's Account." The title of the article was somewhat misleading since the "evidence" presented was neither "new" nor "corroborating." The impression conveyed by the title is that Ambassador Morgenthau was correct, which, in a sense, he was. There was, as all scholars agreed, a series of meetings at Potsdam July 5 and 6 during which the Kaiser conferred with minor figures in the German government and an Austrian envoy. In the Morgenthau account, however, the "Crown Council" was distorted beyond recognition. Since, as Turner maintained, no "accurate account of the conference had yet been offered"--this written a full year after Fay's heavily documented treatment of the July 5 and 6 talks--scholars were bound to accept that account which was best corroborated by subsequent events. Turner's 1929 statement concerning the scarcity of published material relating to the talks can convey only one impression. Either he was relatively unread in the controversy over war responsibility, or he simply dismissed

¹⁵Turner, Current History, XXV, No. 5, 655.

as invalid any opinion running contrary to his own. Aside from excusing the ex-ambassador for believing the tale presumably told him by von Wangenheim,¹⁶ Turner's article did nothing to substantiate Morgenthau's testimony. Neither did Turner do anything to clear up the problem raised by Morgenthau's decision to wait nearly three years before revealing the damning "evidence" upon which the Versailles verdict was primarily based.

In 1926, Albert H. Putney¹⁷ asserted that Fay's contention that Austrian officials were not informed of the Sarajevo plot was incorrect. Because of inadequate protective measures, primary responsibility for Francis Ferdinand's death rested with officials of the Dual Monarchy. Admitting it was unlikely that Austrian officials instigated the murder, Putney claimed they did nothing to protect the heir apparent, knowing his assassination would foment a war which was necessary if Austro-German aims in the Balkans were to be realized.¹⁸ Full cognizance of the "warning" in which Putney placed so much stock was taken by the revisionist writers, but the vagueness of the message and the informal manner in which it was tendered led most

¹⁶Raymond Turner, "New Evidence Corroborating Ambassador Morgenthau's Account," Current History, XXXI, No. 2 (November, 1929), 270.

¹⁷Putney was a wartime employee of the United States Department of State and later dean of the School of Diplomacy and Jurisprudence at American University.

¹⁸Albert H. Putney, "Denial of Serbia's War Responsibility," Current History, XXIII, No. 4 (January, 1926), 527.

of them to conclude that Serbian officials did not wish Austria to take precautionary measures prior to the Archduke's visit to Bosnia.

Having established the fact that a "warning" had been given Austria as to what the consequences of the military inspection tour might be, Putney charged that it was Austria, not Serbia, as Fay and others had written, that was criminally negligent. The motive for the "crime" was simple. The Archduke's death would rid the Dual Monarchy of an heir whom the Austrian and Hungarian officials hated because of his liberal tendencies and also give the Austrian Junkers a pretext for crushing the Serbian nationalist movement.¹⁹

Looking at the general question of war responsibility, Putney maintained that two questions needed answering: What were the causes that for many years rendered the war "inevitable?," and What caused it in 1914? To answer the first, two underlying geographical conditions had to be recognized: the Franco-German frontier and the existence of the "ramshackle" Dual Monarchy. Compared to other post-war scholars, Putney's view of underlying causes was shortsighted to say the least. The first of his "underlying" causes was lightly dismissed since it had been a breeder of European wars for centuries. It was the existence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which made peace in Europe impossible in 1914.²⁰

¹⁹Putney, Current History, XXIII, No. 4, 527.

²⁰Ibid., p. 528.

It was, the American counterpart to Seton-Watson asserted, Austrian mistreatment of subject nationalities that caused Slav discontent, not Serbian nationalistic activity. But the fact the war came in 1914 instead of in 1908, 1911 or 1913 was largely accidental. The pretext presented itself, and in 1914, Germany was ready to take advantage of the occasion. "There was no European statesman who did not clearly understand that the sooner it came the better it would be for the Central Powers."²¹

Ex-Secretary of State Robert Lansing, among other wartime diplomats, joined the ranks of those resisting any change in the Versailles version of responsibility. In 1925, Lansing answered an article by George Viereck, revisionist journalist, which had been written with the approval of the ex-Kaiser and which endeavored to prove William II was in no way personally responsible for the war. Nothing the ex-Kaiser could say, Lansing wrote, in any way lessened "the weight of guilt and contempt which public opinion imposed upon him and which will be his portion as long as he lives and after."²² The former diplomat took pains to include Viereck in his denunciation. The latter consistently abused officials of the United States and sought to justify Germany in her "barbarous conduct of the war."²³

²¹Putney, Current History, XXIII, No. 4, 529.

²²Robert Lansing, "The Ex-Kaiser's Denial of War Guilt Answered," Current History, XXI, No. 4 (January, 1925), 485.

²³Ibid., p. 486.

According to Lansing, nothing was published after 1922 to refute the charge of German war guilt. Obviously, the ex-secretary was either somewhat behind in his reading or preferred to dismiss any work, no matter how heavily documented, that did not harmonize with his views on war responsibility. Since "nothing" had been published to the contrary, "the responsibility of the Prussian autocracy... for plunging the world into war has been proved."²⁴ A further discussion of it would be a waste of time. With this, the question of responsibility was dropped, and the remainder of the article was devoted to a personal attack on the ex-Kaiser.

If William II had borne his guilt quietly, one might feel remorse for one who had erred, but "no compassion goes forth to one who strives to cast the blame for his own sin upon those against whom he has sinned."²⁵ The Kaiser's suggestion that Russia's decision to mobilize was motivated by her desire to use foreign warfare as a "safety valve" to avoid an explosion at home was, according to Lansing, the very technique William II had used to precipitate the war. Socialist pressures caused the decision for war. To the Kaiser, democracy and all liberal political theories were anathemas. A victorious war would vindicate Prussianism and restore the imperialists to

²⁴Lansing, Current History, XXI, No. 4, 486.

²⁵Ibid., p. 486.

popular favor.²⁶ In essence, this was the extent of the short-sighted Lansing thesis of the war's origins. The feeble voice of William Hohenzollern, he wrote, could make no impression on the opinion of mankind. "The case is closed...The verdict of guilty will stand through the coming years as a monument to the colossal folly of the last of the Hohenzollern dynasty."²⁷

So wrote the die-hard American students of war responsibility. Generally, they refused to acknowledge the validity of the most recent scholarship, conveniently branding it German or Bolshevik propaganda. Their theses were constructed on foundations provided them by wartime writers who, in the midst of war hysteria, had allowed themselves to explore war guilt with extreme subjectivity. Since, by the mid-1920's, it was generally agreed that responsibility for the remote causes of the war could not be placed at the door of a single power, the defenders of the Versailles verdict concentrated on immediate causes. When scholarship cut the ground from under the "Potsdam myth," the "bitter-enders" in vain searched for some hidden testimony upon which Germany might be convicted anew. When the heavily documented revisionist case became so impressive that their general outlines and perspectives became practically irrefutable, the champions of the war-time version of responsibility contented themselves with

²⁶Lansing, Current History, XXI, No. 4, 489-90.

²⁷Ibid., p. 491.

attacking the particulars of the new interpretation.

II

When the position of the "bitter-ender" became untenable in the face of the deluge of new evidence from the European archives, many of the erstwhile Entente apologists began to cite the latest disclosures, but only those which tended to uphold their preconceived notions on war guilt. Ostensibly, the methods utilized by these scholars was identical to that of the revisionists. They examined carefully the latest evidence, usually concerning the immediate causes, but from their empirical consideration of the data, arrived at opposed conclusions. In many cases, it is difficult to separate the ultra-conservative American historians from the "salvagers" of the Versailles verdict who contended on the basis of the most recent scholarship that Germany was still primarily responsible for the war.

By all odds, the most influential of the "salvagers" was Bernadotte Schmitt of Chicago University. Of all American scholars of war responsibility, Schmitt must be accorded a place alongside Fay and Barnes as one of the principal protagonists in the post-war debate. His first major contribution to the controversy over war guilt was an article entitled "Triple Alliance and Triple Entente" in which he was "searching for the connecting link which acted as a chain of powder between

the various accumulations of explosive material"²⁸ in the summer of 1914.

The war, according to Professor Schmitt, came in 1914 because in that year the lines were sharply drawn between the rival alliances, and neither could yield without seeing the balance of power pass into the hands of the rival camp. Originally founded for peace, the alliance system seemed, by the turn of the century, to have justified itself, and it appeared that Europe could look forward to years of peace and prosperity. Because of various German activities in the early 1900's--her refusal to consider an Anglo-German rapprochement, her "bellicose" actions in Morocco and her support of Austria in the Bosnian crisis--however, Russia, France and England drew closer together. More than any other individual, von Bülow, German chancellor from 1900 to 1909, "gave the Triple Entente life and being."²⁹ The succession of Bethmann-Hollweg to the chancellorship seemed to ease tensions, but, according to Schmitt, he was not the "master of the political situation in Germany." In pre-1914 Germany, two groups, the militarist-navalist clique and the businessmen-industrialists, usurped political authority from the duly constituted government. The militarists saw France and Great Britain as powers to be dealt with

²⁸Bernadotte E. Schmitt, "Triple Alliance and Triple Entente, 1902-1914," American Historical Review, XXIV, No. 3 (April, 1924), 449.

²⁹Ibid., p. 456.

while the capitalists longed for German hegemony in the Near East.³⁰

The appearance of the Panther at Agadir was no less legitimate than the French occupation of Fez in Morocco; the German refusal to limit naval power so long as Great Britain clung to the Triple Entente was understandable; the German Near Eastern policy was less repulsive than most other instances of modern imperialism. All these German activities, so often condemned by wartime historians, Schmitt condoned. What kept alive the suspicions and fears of the Entente statesmen and eventually led to crystallization of cooperation within the Triple Entente was the pursuance of all three objectives simultaneously.³¹

To Schmitt, the whole problem of war responsibility devolved to one question, "Was war inevitable in 1914?" That no responsible European statesman desired a general war was acknowledged by the Chicago professor. Misplaced suspicions in each of the rival alliances was the primary cause for the armed peace before 1914 and ultimately the reason for the war. When the supreme test came, the breakdown was induced as much by panic as by the bellicose affirmations of any single power.³² The one bright spot in an otherwise dismal diplomatic picture in pre-war Europe

³⁰Schmitt, American Historical Review, XXIV, No. 3, 457.

³¹Ibid., pp. 457-460.

³²Ibid., p. 464.

was Sir Edward Grey, the British foreign minister. For his failure in achieving his ultimate goal, an effective concert of Europe, however, Grey himself was principally responsible. Because of his non-committal attitude toward Germany and his repeated assurances to France, each side felt it knew what the British position would be in the event of war, and each was willing to risk a war to secure its ascendancy in Europe. Victory, each camp knew, would depend upon the march of events in the Balkans and the Near East.

German plans in the Near East called for vassalage of the Ottoman Empire, while Austrian aims in the Balkans included the isolation of Serbia by a string of alliances. Neither of the Central Powers, Schmitt wrote, intended the outright annexation of territory, but the success of their plans would have given them political control from Belgrade to the Persian Gulf. To Russia, such a situation would be intolerable, so she formed the Balkan League which might be used against either the Hapsburg or the Ottoman Empire whichever occasion presented itself.

By the summer of 1914, it was apparent that, if isolation and diminution of Serbia was achieved by Austria, and if Bulgaria was won over to the Triple Alliance through the cession of Macedonia, the Teutonic road to the East would be secure. Rumania was veering toward the Triple Entente. Such a rapprochement would form a Serbo-Rumanian wedge between Austria and Bulgaria and make the Dual

Alliance the arbiter of Balkan politics. "Thus, Serbia had become the key to the whole Eastern Question."³³

According to Schmitt, measures taken by the Dual Monarchy enabled the Junkers in Germany, who were already "jumpy," to take control. Bethmann-Hollweg, when he realized war was imminent, exerted pressure on Vienna, but he had clung too long to his dream "of scoring a resounding triumph for the Triple Alliance."³⁴

The attitude of Germany in the fateful days of July, 1914 was seen by Schmitt as the major cause of the war. Her refusal of the Grey proposal for a conference of powers after it had been accepted by Russia, Italy and France was the event which finally precipitated the war and ultimately ranged England on the side of France and Russia.³⁵

That Schmitt's work is scholarly and his method historical can hardly be questioned, despite Barnes' assertions to the contrary. He very simply cited the most recent scholarship bearing on war responsibility and drew different interpretations in many cases than did the revisionist scholars. Schmitt, in fact, accepted the new interpretation on many points, particularly in reference to the more remote causes. Like many of his colleagues, however, he felt that war was not inevitable in 1914, so

³³Schmitt, American Historical Review, XXIV, No. 3, 469.

³⁴Ibid., p. 472.

³⁵Ibid., p. 473.

it was the immediate causes, those which ignited the inflammable material that had been accumulating for decades, which were of prime concern. Here, Professor Schmitt contended, the burden of responsibility fell on Germany and Austria. But the fact that Schmitt accepted the revisionist interpretation of underlying causes in his early writings is an indication that he thoroughly studied the latest archival revelations and applied his conclusions with due caution, not as Professor Barnes charged, with his eyes closed.

As additional primary source material became available, that is after the French and British archives were opened, Schmitt, unlike Fay and Barnes, adopted an even more conservative view of the war's origins. This tendency, which culminated in his two volume work, The Coming of the War, can be seen in a review of the first volume of the Gooch-Temperley collection of British documents. According to Schmitt, the British records revealed that Austria was the aggressor in 1914 and that Germany was the "evil genius of the piece."³⁶ The most vivid impression to be gleaned from the documents was that the primary purpose of the British government was to avert war, but, if that was not possible, to make sure that England joined the "right" side and did so before it was "too late."³⁷ Schmitt's

³⁶Bernadotte E. Schmitt, "British Revelations on the Outbreak of the War," Current History, XXV, No. 6 (March, 1927), 851.

³⁷Ibid., p. 851.

choice of words might have been better here. The use of the word, "right," conveys to the student the passing of a moral judgment and lends authority to the "Anglophile" appellation hung on Schmitt by some of his revisionist colleagues. Is it, it might be asked, the place of the truly objective historian to pass moral judgments?

Schmitt's two volumes on the origins of the war were eagerly awaited by all historians interested in the problem of war responsibility. By defenders of the Versailles verdict, the work was received as a God-send, for here at last (1930) was a comprehensive, scholarly treatment of the question which held the Central Powers responsible for the conflagration. By other American scholars, revisionists, the work was a disappointment, because it demonstrated that an interpretation empirically drawn from the latest evidence other than revisionist might be assigned to the events leading to the war.

The fundamental reason, Schmitt wrote, that a two-nation quarrel developed into a world war was the rival alliance systems. Each year, the nations in the Triple Entente and Triple Alliance drew closer together until by July, 1914, none saw an escape from a war which directly concerned only two powers. In the decade before 1914, there had been four possible sources of an European war: the century-old antagonism between Germany and France, the recent rivalry between Great Britain and Germany, Austro-Italian rivalry and the explosive

Near East.³⁸ All national animosities, however, had subsided by 1914, except in the Near East and Balkans, and there, the situation was relatively simple. Russia and Germany were rivals at Constantinople, and Russia and the Dual Monarchy were opponents in the struggle over the Balkans. Russia promoted a Balkan League of Rumania, Serbia and Greece to thwart Austria's Balkan ambitions, while Austria worked for a counter-league also including Rumania and Greece but with Bulgaria as its pivot which would isolate Serbia and render impossible Greater Serbian aspirations. Germany supported Austria's Balkan policy, because, in that way, her national interests would best be served. As Turkey came more and more under German economic and military influence and since Bulgaria seemed on the verge of passing into the arms of the Triple Alliance, Serbia stood as the only barricade to Austro-German hegemony in the Balkans. "A victory [over Serbia] by either side would mean the turning of the European balance in its favor."³⁹

For her part in the assassination which precipitated the war, none of which Schmitt denied, Serbia was excused because of the "peculiar character of Austro-Serbian relations."⁴⁰ The principal responsibility for the

³⁸Bernadotte E. Schmitt, The Coming of the War (New York: Charles Scribner's & Sons, 1930), I, 57-59.

³⁹Ibid., p. 174.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 247.

murder of Francis Ferdinand fell not on Serbia but on the shoulders of Austrian officials, because they had been negligent in taking adequate precautionary measures, having been forewarned as to what the consequences of the Sarajevo visit might be.

Emperor William's words, "Now or never," spoken after hearing of the murder of his good friend, the Austrian heir apparent, constituted, according to Professor Schmitt, a well-thought out expression of German official feeling toward Serbia. The Kaiser's affirmations "have to be considered as a serious expression of the opinion that the time had come to apply force."⁴¹ The words, uttered at a time of grave shock, represented the inauguration of a policy which was followed through at Potsdam seven days later. The Austrian plan presented to William II on July 5 calling for "isolation and diminution of Serbia" could only be pursued by force and was "admirably calculated to bring about European complications." The Kaiser endorsed the plan, and as "first in order of time, first in degree of authority among his countrymen, the German Emperor...sanctioned the course Austria-Hungary desired to follow."⁴² It was not at all a "blank check" that Germany gave Austria July 5 since the envoy from the Dual Monarchy explicitly stated all that Austria-Hungary hoped to accomplish by the ultimatum. Here, Schmitt

⁴¹Schmitt, I, 291.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 293-96.

parted company with most scholarly post-war historians who claimed the Austrian plans were presented only in the vaguest terms at Potsdam.

German actions in the summer of 1914 were dictated by three considerations: (1) For once, the Dual Monarchy presented an united front, and Germany felt the opportunity to take advantage of that unanimity of purpose after the murder of Francis Ferdinand should not be neglected; (2) A good case against Serbia existed; and (3) If this case were promptly exploited, the other powers, out of sympathy for Austria, would not interfere.⁴³ William II and Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg were the first "responsible statesmen" to make the decision which might conceivably have the most dire consequences. "They may be acquitted of deliberate intent to precipitate a European war, but they did elect to put the system of alliances to its severest test...It was they who took the gambler's plunge."⁴⁴

Germany was kept constantly informed of Austrian actions throughout the month of July, an allegation other historians have questioned. Furthermore, Germany received a copy of the ultimatum a full day before the note was presented to Serbian officials in Belgrade. If Germany had sincerely wished to avoid war, why, asked Schmitt, did she not stop her ally before she dispatched the ill-fated ultimatum? Other historians have answered that

⁴³Schmitt, I, 318.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 329.

question a hundred times over. With communications as they were in 1914 it was literally impossible to do anything about the note which was already in the hands of the Austrian ambassador in Belgrade when the duplicate was received in Berlin.

Austria-Hungary, Schmitt contended, was immediately responsible for the consequences of the "impossible ultimatum," but she would not have gone to the lengths she did if it had not been for German pledges of unconditional support. Germany accepted the Austrian program which had been "carefully" explained, if not with deliberate intent to precipitate a European war, with a complete willingness to accept such a war.⁴⁵ Then she and her ally began an interim program designed to lull Europe into complacency where acceptance of the fait accompli would be certain. The Serbian answer to the ultimatum was rejected at Vienna for one reason--the Central Powers were determined that this time the opportunity to achieve their economic and political ambitions in the Balkans would not be passed up.

Although Austria wished to postpone her declaration of war on Serbia, Germany insisted on prompt action. "The declaration of war was issued in order to please the German government."⁴⁶ Simultaneously, German diplomats directed their efforts toward a general European acceptance of the Austrian action and, by overtures to

⁴⁵Schmitt, I, 451.

⁴⁶Schmitt, II, 15-16.

England and France, endeavored to separate Russia from her allies. When it was recognized in Berlin that Russia would not permit Serbia's humiliation, German officials expressed misgivings over the course events had taken, but it was too late for regrets. Having urged prompt action on the Dual Monarchy, the German Chancellor and Foreign Minister could not easily have reversed their course by urging her to moderate. "They did the logical thing; they decided to fight the business through."⁴⁷ Although Schmitt admitted German military preparations had not progressed as far as those of Russia and France, he suspected that "intellectual preparations" had gone rather far by July 27. By that date, Bethmann-Hollweg began to doubt the prospects of British neutrality but advised Austria only to express an opinion on Lord Grey's mediation proposal. He did not advise a change of course; he was merely "throwing dust in the eyes of Lord Grey."⁴⁸

On July 28, Austria-Hungary reached her goal. There had been no hypocrisy about Count Berchtold's conduct as there had been with Germany's. Berchtold, however, would not have taken the fatal step if he had not been pushed by Austria's infinitely stronger ally. While many students of war responsibility cited the Kaiser's assertion that the Serbian answer to the Austrian note had removed the causes for war as illustrative of the pacific intent

⁴⁷Schmitt, II, 63.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 71.

of official Germany, Schmitt saw the Emperor's words as one of those "sudden changes of mind of which the Kaiser was capable" and a further indication of his mental instability.⁴⁹ It will be recalled that Schmitt did not view the emotional outburst by William II at the time of Francis Ferdinand's assassination in the same light. With the German Emperor then in a virtual state of shock, Schmitt felt the Kaiser's words represented a well-reasoned declaration of intent.

Clearly, Bethmann-Hollweg and the Kaiser desired the Dual Monarchy to take the plunge so long as England could be kept neutral, Schmitt surmised. When this looked doubtful, they could not renege on the Potsdam promises, so the German chancellor advised Austria to proceed in such a way that Russia might be saddled with the war responsibility. When the Central Powers elected to navigate a course which had for its objective the solution of the Serbian question in their exclusive interest, they invited Russian intervention. "It is therefore as much upon them and their refusal to make any genuine concessions as upon the Russian government that responsibility for Russian mobilization rests."⁵⁰ Furthermore, Schmitt maintained, Russia could not be deemed responsible because of her mobilization since such a military measure was not understood in that nation to mean war.

⁴⁹Schmitt, II, 122.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 255-56.

The European War came in 1914 because no diplomacy, however skillful, could have kept the Dual Monarchy from attacking Serbia or have thwarted the determination of Russia to defend the Slavic state. Although the struggle directly concerned only Austria and Russia, the rival alliance systems made certain that it would be extended to all of Europe. Most revisionist scholars would contend that the struggle was not at all between Russia and the Dual Monarchy but between Austria and Serbia, and that Russia had forfeited her hypocritical position as "protector of the Balkan Slavs" in the Isvolsky-Aehrenthal talks of 1908.

The fundamental and irreconcilable difference between Schmitt and the revisionists was a divergence in the perspective from which war responsibility was viewed. If, as Schmitt felt, the war was not inevitable in 1914, then it was the immediate causes with which the scholar wishing to establish responsibility must concern himself. The revisionists, on the other hand, viewed the moves made on the diplomatic chessboard in 1914 as relatively inconsequential and looked to the remote or indirect causes, the events of the decades prior to the outbreak of hostilities, for the real reasons for the war.

How the most rabid of the proponents of revisionism received the Schmitt findings is illustrated by Harry E. Barnes' review of the work. Schmitt's volumes, Barnes wrote, represented the "last, frantic effort" of the

leader of the salvagers of the Entente verdict to confirm the wartime version of responsibility.⁵¹ An incredible "Anglomania" amounting to a "fixed idea" was the overriding characteristic of the two volumes. In analysing the causes for the war, Schmitt had overlooked the most important single event of all--the Buchlau Conference of 1908 where Isvolsky gave the Russian blessing to the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In what was without a doubt an overstatement of the case, Barnes charged that not a single major contention of Schmitt "possesses the slightest validation."⁵² Prophetically, Barnes cautioned that Europe could not "safely" go on maintaining the "absurd lie." In 1930, the friends of peace in Europe were appealing to Hindenburg to save them from Hitler. What would be happening in 1933 if the spirit of Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Poincaré still ruled Europe?⁵³

Another of the more distinguished scholars among those who maintained a defense of the Versailles verdict on the basis of the latest documentary evidence was Charles Seymour whose Diplomatic Backgrounds of the War was examined above. Seymour, it should be noted, did not

⁵¹Harry E. Barnes, "Salvaging German War Guilt," Review of The Coming of the War, by Bernadotte E. Schmitt, The New Republic, LXIV, No. 852 (October 22, 1930), 270.

⁵²Ibid., p. 273.

⁵³Ibid., p. 273.

rewrite his earlier account of the diplomacy leading to war in the light of the post-war disclosures. After the war, the Yale historian's principal interest shifted to American diplomacy during the period of neutrality. In his periodical articles on the war guilt problem, however, one finds that Seymour, an adviser to Woodrow Wilson at Versailles, retained essentially his 1916 view of the German nation, although he accepted the revisionist view on some points. Reviewing the newly published British documents in 1927, he acknowledged that the disclosures tended to confirm the conclusions of the moderate revisionists. Also confirmed by the Gooch-Temperley collection was the view that Germany did not "bulldoze" Austria into war, and that Austria, not Germany, was primarily responsible. Furthermore, it was "true that Russian mobilization forced the intervention of Germany. But it is certain that long before military factors entered the situation...Austria-Hungary, in cold blood, decided upon violent action against Serbia,"⁵⁴ and in spite of imminent Russian intervention, she held to her decision. It is perhaps worth mentioning that the same interpretation, whether rightly or wrongly, could have been gleaned from any one of a dozen documentary collections, but Charles Seymour was unwilling to acknowledge the validity of such a view until it had been corroborated by the belated

⁵⁴Charles Seymour, "Austria-Hungary in 1914," Saturday Review of Literature, III, No. 38 (April 16, 1927), 730.

publication of the British documents.

That the Anglophile Seymour retained his wartime view of the German nation was confirmed by an article in Current History. Germany, he contended, looked upon the straightforwardness and candor of British Foreign Minister Grey, whose outstanding characteristic was absolute honesty, as a masque concealing intrigue. Not only were the German characterizations of Grey erroneous, but their suspicions of British understandings with France and Russia were ill-founded. The Entente Cordiale with France in 1904 and the Anglo-Russian accord of 1907 were, in fact, moves to prevent war, but in Germany, they gave rise to the "myth of encirclement."⁵⁵

Grey's greatest triumph, according to Seymour, was the 1913 Conference of Ambassadors by which the British Foreign Minister averted a war in circumstances more provoking than in 1914. In the latter year, however, the civil rulers of Germany were not permitted to meet the situation in the same manner, and the militarists were not willing to forego the opportunity presented by the Austro-Serbian quarrel.⁵⁶

After considering all of the diplomatic evidence to the contrary, Seymour in 1934 still maintained that Entente statesmen had felt their's was the cause of

⁵⁵Charles Seymour, "Secrets of British Diplomacy," Current History, XXIII, No. 3 (December, 1925), 329.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 329.

justice and democracy in 1914.⁵⁷ He asserted that most historians would agree with President Wilson that the war was a conflict of principles. No amount of new light on war origins could alter the difference in political philosophy that in 1914 had separated the Central Powers on one side and the Allies on the other. After the failure of the '48er's and the triumph of Bismark, Germany had accepted the Hegelian doctrine by which the state was made an entity apart and above the collective mass of individual citizens. The state was personified in one man, the Kaiser, and drew on the loyalty of the military caste. Such a philosophy was antipathetic to Great Britain, France and the United States.

That no particular government willed a European war in 1914 is a platitude with which Seymour would not argue. Once in the war, however, the European statesmen looked about to see what advantage for the future might be gained from the disadvantage of the present. Thus, wrote Seymour, the war aims were formulated.⁵⁹ Such a statement cannot be passed over without comment. That Seymour could possibly believe Allied war aims were formulated after 1914 betrays either an extreme naiveté or a decided ignorance of some aspects of the problem posed by war responsibility.

⁵⁷Charles Seymour, American Diplomacy During the World War (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1934), pp. 262-63.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 19-20.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 254.

To accept such an explanation for the origins of French and Russian war aims, namely Alsace-Lorraine and the Straits, would be to render the years of productive scholarship in the European archives invalid.

The task of defending Russia in the face of mounting, incriminating evidence was undertaken by several writers. Robert C. Binkley of Stanford University suggested that historians refrain from attempting to find "war guilt," a term which indicated criminal intent, and concentrate upon determining which nation was most responsible for creating the conditions in which the European War broke out. In the light of his suggestion, Binkley produced evidence which he felt exonerated Russia of "responsibility." From the Hoover War Library, he introduced a document in which Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov urged caution on Belgrade before receipt of the ultimatum. Since the French mission headed by Poincaré was in Russia when the pacific memorandum was drafted and since it was "probably" collectively conceived by Russian and French diplomats, Binkley argued that it illustrated the peaceful intent of both nations. The memorandum "strongly testifies that the original intent of the Russian government [and France by implication] was honorable and pacific."⁶⁰

Charles Altschul also offered a solution to the semantics problem which arose in discussing war guilt.

⁶⁰Robert C. Binkley, "New Light on Russia's War Guilt," Current History, XXIII, No. 4 (January, 1926), 533.

When considering the responsibility for the war, he suggested, it should be made clear whether or not one is thinking of responsibility for fundamental conditions of war or for precipitating the war. For the fundamental conditions of the war of 1914, all European nations were responsible, and the debate was merely over relative responsibility. The Treaty of Versailles charged Germany with causing the outbreak of the war, but not for causing the circumstances of the war.⁶¹

Efforts by revisionists to attach the blame for the war on Russia were seen by Altschul as no more than a continuation of German wartime propaganda. The Franco-Russian alliance was always "defensive," and it "remained with Germany to commit the overt act which alone forced the Entente into war."⁶² If one resisted the temptation to stray from the ultimate goal--an understanding of the tumultuous days in June and July, 1914--one would find it difficult to escape the impression that Russia and France "were not in the least inclined to provoke hostilities."⁶³ Mobilization was not tantamount to war. Such a thesis was solely a German military and administrative conception which had been abandoned in Russia by 1912. The conclusion that mobilization meant war was absolutely untenable in

⁶¹Charles Altschul, "The War Guilt Controversy," Current History, XXIV, No. 3 (June, 1926), 391-92.

⁶²Ibid., p. 393.

⁶³Ibid., p. 393.

the light of the latest evidence, Altschul charged.

Reviewing the newly-published British documents, Michael Florinsky of Columbia University wrote that the unfounded charge of Russian war guilt was further "exploded" by the English revelations. In regard to Russian responsibility, the Gooch-Temperley collection emphasized the straightforward and conciliatory attitude of Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov in his struggle to avert war at any price compatible with Serbian territorial integrity.⁶⁴ If the baseless accusations brought against Sazonov and the Russian government by a "few American sympathizers" needed refutation, Florinsky suggested it would be found in the British documents.

Perhaps the outstanding characteristic of the "salvagers" was their acceptance of the dictum that the war was not inevitable in 1914 or at any time. With the remote causes thus disposed of, they could honestly devote their attention to the immediate causes of the war--causes which most revisionists saw as secondary in assessing responsibility. These war guilt scholars, unlike those of the Hazen stamp, considered the latest documentary evidence, but used it to substantiate and defend the justice of the Treaty of Versailles. Unlike their wartime colleagues, however, many of the "salvagers" accepted the divided responsibility thesis applied to the indirect conditions

⁶⁴Michael Florinsky, "Russia's Responsibility," Saturday Review of Literature, III, No. 39 (April 23, 1927), 750.

of the war, but felt that Germany, on the basis of immediate causes, was guilty of precipitating the war in 1914. Citing the same evidence as the revisionists, the Seymour-Schmitt "school" often arrived at diametrically opposed conclusions. Their method was essentially the same, but their respective findings were poles apart as shall be illustrated below.

III

The revisionists logically fall into two loosely defined groups, those who favored a divided responsibility feeling all of the belligerent powers were guilty of contributing toward the outbreak of the war, and those who took the more uncompromising position that neither of the Central Powers were guilty in 1914, and that responsibility should be collectively shouldered by Russia, France and Serbia.

By general historical consensus, the most outstanding of the former group, the moderate revisionists, was Sidney Bradshaw Fay.⁶⁵ Originally published in 1928, Fay's The Origins of the World War expounded the thesis of war responsibility which has been accepted by most scholarly American historians. The two volumes have several times undergone revision, the latest in 1948 when Fay wrote that there was no need to change the general outlines of his work although recent scholarship had necessitated

⁶⁵In 1928, Fay was a professor of European history at Smith College. Later, he became a member of the Harvard faculty.

some revision of detail. In other words, the Fay thesis of 1928 was sound in 1948, and one can safely assume it will remain equally valid in 1968.

Fay deprecated both those who contended that Germany was solely guilty in 1914 and those who attached responsibility only to Russia or France. All parties to the dispute were responsible, for the basic guilt lay in the events of the century preceeding the outbreak of hostilities. No serious historian, Fay wrote in 1928, any longer accepted the dictum of the Allied victors in 1919 that Germany and her allies were solely responsible. All agreed that the blame was divided; the only question was over how the responsibility was to be divided.⁶⁶

The underlying causes could be traced to national sentiment engendered by the French Revolution. Fay arranged the complex and interrelated factors underlying World War I under five general headings: the alliance systems, militarism, nationalism, economic imperialism and the newspaper press. Of these, the greatest single cause was the European alliance systems which came into existence after 1871. The systems, while they lasted, did much to preserve peace, but they also made certain that any war involving one major power would inevitably implicate all Europe.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Sidney B. Fay, The Origins of the World War (2d ed. rev.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948), I, 15-16.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 32-34.

Having examined "fundamental causes" generally, Fay began his chronological narrative with the Franco-Prussian War. His discussion of the events between 1870 and 1914 is intensive but only so far as is necessary for an understanding of the problem. In addition to assimilating all of the pertinent documentary evidence, he considered the most important of the secondary sources relating to responsibility. In cases where evidence from two or more sources was contradictory, Fay examined each thoroughly, carefully weighing the merits or demerits of each, before revealing his reasons for accepting one document and rejecting another. There are no a priori judgments evident in Fay's work.

The Franco-Prussian War reversed a situation which had existed in Europe for two hundred years. Now France, not Germany, was weak and in danger of attack. But more than a defeat for France, the war provided the occasion for Bismark's gravest blunder--the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. The provinces remained an "open sore threatening the peace of Europe for forty years."⁶⁸

After the war, the "Iron Chancellor" devised a scheme whereby France might be indefinitely isolated to prevent future ravages on the infant German state. In 1882, France's isolation was ostensibly complete, and German progress was guaranteed by the Triple Alliance. Bismark, however, had not considered the possibility of the Franco-Russian rapprochement of 1894, "the natural

⁶⁸Fay, I, 50-52.

result of suspicions...and irritations against Germany existing in both countries."⁶⁹ Like the Triple Alliance, the Dual Alliance was defensive. The Franco-Russian alliance, in its early years, strengthened rather than threatened peace, because it established a healthy counterpoise to the Triple Alliance. The decade, 1894-1904, however, witnessed two changes that tended to destroy the European equilibrium--England's exchange of diplomatic isolation for an Entente Cordiale with France and Italy's vacillation and dubious loyalty to her allies.⁷⁰ Before her adherence to the Dual Alliance powers, England had offered an alliance to Germany, but the Kaiser and von Bülow were not receptive. Germany was not worried about an Anglo-French entente since such a move, it was felt, would undoubtedly lead to a breach in the Dual Alliance. In 1904, the Entente became a reality with British and French diplomats delimiting their respective spheres of interest with little regard to "rightful" German claims in Morocco. The division of the North African territory precipitated the Tangiers crisis and the subsequent Algeciras Conference of 1906, the importance of which was that it illustrated the close ties between Great Britain and France. Chancellor von Bülow's Moroccan policy, ostensibly a German diplomatic victory, was, in fact, worse than a defeat because it led to the feeling in France that

⁶⁹Fay, I, 105.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 123-24.

war would be preferable to another humiliation at the hands of Germany.⁷¹

The informal, secret naval and military agreements following on the heels of the signing of the Franco-English Entente became very binding. Although Grey insisted that English hands were free, he permitted France to feel that England was bound to support her. It was extremely dangerous, Fay pointed out, to allow military authorities to develop strategic plans which necessarily involved diplomatic obligations of which Parliament remained ignorant until 1914. "Herein lies Grey's responsibility for the war."⁷² Military conversations, however, had progressed a good deal further than even Parliament suspected in 1914. As early as 1911, Franco-British talks had advanced to the point where it was said in Russia that the French army would concentrate, in the event of war, as quickly as the German army, and that from the twelfth day, it would be in a position to take the offensive against Germany with the aid of the English army on its left flank, the Belgian frontier.⁷³ Apparently that frontier was more sacrosanct to the British parliamentarians than to the foreign office. While the von Schlieffen plan and the German "rape" of Belgium received wide notoriety in the world press, little notice was given the minature Anglo-French "Schlieffen" plan.

⁷¹Fay, I, 190-91.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 192-93.

⁷³Ibid., p. 213.

Isvolsky's accession to the portfolio of minister of foreign affairs in Russia heralded the drive toward the Anglo-Russian settlement of 1907, and the Triple Entente became a fact. Germany was diplomatically isolated, and in the next seven years, the lines between the Triple Entente and Triple Alliance solidified. The crystallizing of the rival systems was accompanied by four sets of "tendencies:" (1) Each alliance evolved from a strictly "defensive" coalition and espoused "offensive" characteristics; (2) Attempts were made by both Germany and France to strengthen the bonds of their respective alliances; (3) Friction within each system necessitated concessions or "blank checks;" and (4) The armaments race was pursued with renewed vigor. As Churchill so aptly put it, "Where the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente had stood side by side, in 1914 they stood face to face."⁷⁴

Although Germany was on the road toward more amicable relations with Russia after the Potsdam conversations of 1910-1911, her relations with the other Entente nations steadily worsened. The French occupation of Fez rendered the Act of Algeciras a dead letter and set the stage for the appearance of the German gunboat, Panther, at Agadir. Fearing a possible bilateral agreement would come from the "direct conversations" between France and Germany whereby the latter might gain an Atlantic port in Africa, Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, threatened

⁷⁴Fay, I, 225-26.

Germany in his "Mansion House" speech. Germany came out of her "Moroccan Adventure" more isolated than ever.⁷⁵

The fall of the pacific Caillaux ministry and the formation in 1912 of the Poincaré "Great Ministry" including Delcassé bode ill for Franco-German relations. With the help of Isvolsky, now Russian ambassador in Paris, the bonds of the Triple Entente grew steadily stronger. Prior to 1912, Fay maintained, Russo-French cooperation toward war was not so close as the uncompromising revisionists would have us believe. After the elevation of Poincaré to the premiership and subsequently to the presidency, however, France actively supported Russian aggressive intentions in the Balkans and assured her of support in case of war with Germany.⁷⁶ The demise of the pacific Georges Louis, French ambassador to Russia, and his replacement in 1913 by the bellicose Delcassé, who encouraged Russia in her uncompromising Balkan policies, was one of the principal reasons the war came in 1914.⁷⁷ As the Triple Entente grew stronger, the vacillation of the Triple Alliance's "weak sister," Italy, materially weakened the Central Powers.

Although the armaments race was intensified as a result of the Balkan crises of 1912 and 1913, the two wars provided one beneficial result--an attempt at creating a

⁷⁵Fay, I, 312.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 330-31.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 342.

concert of Europe to transcend the rival alliance systems-- for which Lord Grey and Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, more than any other European statesmen, worked unceasingly. The failure of their efforts, Fay wrote, stemmed directly from the ineptitude of European statesmen to see beyond the confines of their own system. While such an anarchic atmosphere prevailed, Franz Ferdinand's assassination posed a new threat in the Balkans.

There was, Fay contended, absolutely no truth in the charge that Austria was pushed into the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908 by Germany to expedite the completion of the Bagdad Railroad. "If anyone pushed, it was Russia" in the person of Isvolsky.⁷⁸ The major effect of the Bosnian crisis, besides further alienating Italy from the Central Powers, was that it encouraged Russia and Serbia to regard the annexation not as a fait accompli but as a Serbian Alsace-Lorraine.⁷⁹ Germany did back Austria in 1908, but only because she was her only dependable ally. Between 1908 and 1914, the German influence on Austria was one of moderation. To represent Germany as having complete control over her ally as so many did, Fay argued, was incorrect. It was not until well into the war that Germany, recognizing the Dual Monarchy's general administrative incompetence, assumed control over her ally's destiny.

⁷⁸Fay, I, 385-88.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 399.

The settlement of the difficulties caused by the General von Liman mission to Turkey in early 1914 indicated to Fay that the war was not inevitable. Of all world problems, however, the Balkan question was the most nearly incapable of peaceful solution.⁸⁰ After Isvolsky had failed to open the Straits diplomatically in 1911, he worked persistently for the only alternative to open "Russia's back door"--a general European war. By 1914, he had convinced Foreign Minister Sazonov that only by a European conflagration could Russia's historic mission be realized. In the spring of that year, the bonds of the Triple Entente were further strengthened by Anglo-Russian naval agreements. Entente solidarity was a fact, and Isvolsky could say in August, 1914, "C'est ma guerre!"⁸¹

The "immediate occasion" for the World War was the murder of the Austrian heir apparent. Had it not occurred, Fay wrote, there would have been neither an Austro-Serbian war nor a World War, and European diplomacy, as incompetent as it was, might well have averted a war for years. On this ground, Fay justified his intensive study of the plot "which was to have such awful and world racking consequences."⁸²

From his investigation of the plans for the assassination, Fay concluded that the combination of activities by the "Black Hand," a secret organization dedicated to the

⁸⁰Fay, I, 546.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 426.

⁸²Ibid., II, 53.

union of all Serbs by whatever means necessary; the Narodna Obrana, a "cultural" organization, disseminating anti-Austrian propaganda; and the Serbian government, a number of whose officials knew of the plot and did nothing to prevent it, were responsible for the Archduke's death. The so-called warning from Serbia to Austria was very vague and did not in any way "relieve the Serbian government of the guilt of withholding information concerning a plot to commit murder...a crime known in private life as 'compounding a felony.'"⁸³

Fay subjected Ambassador Morgenthau's allegations, cited at Versailles as proof of German war guilt, to careful scrutiny proving beyond a doubt that the Potsdam Council, as the American diplomat portrayed it, was largely a myth. That the Kaiser held separate meetings July 5 and 6 was acknowledged. To William II, the Austrian ambassador related Count Berchtold's intention to make the Sarajevo incident the occasion for a final reckoning with Serbia. The principal topic of discussion was not, however, the difficulties with Serbia but the prospective inclusion of Bulgaria in the Triple Alliance. How the "blank check" was given in Berlin, and how it was used in Vienna were two different things. By letting Austria judge for herself with implicit assurances of German support, Germany placed Europe in the hands of the unprincipled Austrian Foreign Minister. "The Kaiser and his advisers on July 5

⁸³Fay, II, 166.

and 6 were not criminals plotting the World War; they were simpletons putting a noose about their necks!"⁸⁴ In so doing, of course, they incurred a grave but not the primary responsibility for what later happened.

Before the ultimatum was finally drafted, Austria kept Germany informed, but after July 14, the Dual Monarchy paid little heed to German advice. Germany was not shown the precise terms of the Austrian ultimatum, merely a general outline. The assertion heard in some quarters that she had no prior knowledge of the note's contents was a lie. So too was Grey's assertion of the same thing. On July 16, he too had been informed as to the substance of the Austrian note. Unfortunately, Fay commented, diplomatic lying was not the monopoly of any one country in July, 1914.⁸⁵ When German officials were shown the exact text of the ultimatum, the general consensus was that it was "too sharp," but that was July 22, and it was too late to do anything since the note was presented in Belgrade the next day. Feeling the war could be more easily localized if Austria was energetically supported, Germany accepted the fait accompli.

The Serbian reply to the note, which Entente historians maintained was more conciliatory than could be expected under the circumstances, was, in fact, more conciliatory in form than in substance. Actually, Serbia

⁸⁴Fay, II, 166.

⁸⁵Ibid., 260-64.

accepted only two of the demands unconditionally. After the diplomatic break between Austria and Serbia, proposals came from all quarters to preserve the peace. The first was Grey's suggestion for direct conversations between the Dual Monarchy and Serbia which was vetoed by France as "very dangerous." Grey's proposal for mediation between Austria and Russia was accepted by Germany but refused by Russia. Grey's suggestion for four-power talks was refused by both Germany and Russia, not Germany alone as Entente writers so often attested. Finally, the German appeal for direct conversations was thwarted by the Austrian declaration of war which was designed to "cut the ground from any attempt at intervention."⁸⁶

Russia could no more desert Serbia than Germany could Austria, and Sazonov devised a plan of partial mobilization to prevent the Dual Monarchy from striking Serbia. Until July 25, Sazonov worked for peace, but on that day, he and the Tsar conceded general mobilization to the Russian militarists.⁸⁷ The Russian mobilization, generally held in pre-1914 Europe to be tantamount to a declaration of war, subverted Bethmann-Hollweg's eleventh hour attempts to pacify Vienna. France had pledged her support July 28, and with this in mind, the Tsar consented on July 29 to official general mobilization. The order was rescinded by Nicholas, who was convinced of the genuine efforts of

⁸⁶Fay, II, 400-16.

⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 327-28.

the Kaiser to placate Austria, but Russian militarists continued the mobilization which was officially re-ordered the following day. Contrary to the assertions of pro-Entente writers, there was, according to Fay, no Potsdam Council on July 29 where final German plans for war were formulated. Instead, the German Chancellor, on that day, applied the brakes to von Moltke's plans for a swift blow. It was Russian mobilization, not military discussions, which determined German action and plunged Europe into war.⁸⁸

In 1914, none of the European powers wanted a war. It broke out because in each nation leaders did things that should not have been done, and did not do things they ought to have done. "All of the European countries...were responsible."⁸⁹ The dictum of Versailles very simply was untrue. It was a confession exacted by the victors from the vanquished. Fay disavowed efforts by any historian to affix the exact responsibility for the war. Even if it could be assigned, he maintained that it would be different for the immediate causes from the remote causes.

Serbia's failure to prevent an assassination of which she was aware was a grave responsibility for the immediate origins of the war. Berchtold gambled on a localized war for "self-preservation" and lost. The one man who might have been able to conciliate the diverse nationalities in

⁸⁸Fay, II, 514.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 548.

the "Ramshackle Empire" short of war was the victim of the occasion for the war. Germany did not plot a European war, and she made genuine efforts to prevent the holocaust. Austria, however, would probably not have gambled on a localized war had she not received assurances from her stronger ally, however innocently they might have been tendered. "To this extent, Germany must accept responsibility for the war."⁹⁰ Germany was, in fact, the last of the European powers to accept the fact that the war was "inevitable." It was not inevitable until the premature Russian mobilization.

France, by her encouragement of Russia, was as guilty as Germany for her assurances to the Dual Monarchy. Finally, everything else having failed, an explicit declaration of the English position would probably have averted a European war. The refusal to commit England until after hostilities had begun was the responsibility shouldered by Grey. Furthermore, Germany's eleventh hour effort to urge moderation on Austria received little notice in England. There were, by July 29, indications that Downing Street already had made up its mind that war with Germany was probable.⁹¹

In the forty years after 1870, Fay concluded, Europe was divided into two opposing camps whose hostility toward one another was increased by armaments, economic rivalry,

⁹⁰Fay, II, 549-553.

⁹¹S. B. Fay, "Germany's Part," Saturday Review of Literature, III, No. 38 (April 16, 1927), 729.

nationalism and the newspaper press. Still, if there had been no assassination on June 28, 1914, Europe probably would have had peace for a number of years. That factor consolidated the elements of hostility and started a succession of events which ultimately led to war. For that factor, Serbian nationalism was primarily responsible.⁹²

In a later periodical article, Professor Fay elucidated upon what he felt was one of the principal fundamental causes of the war, the poisoned atmosphere created by the European press. For this cause, Fay considered the London Times under Lord Northcliffe, later of Wellington House, one of the more guilty. Northcliffe and his staff were obsessed with the idea that Germany posed a threat to Great Britain and conveyed that impression to government officials by their constant extractions from the Pan-German press which in no way reflected German public opinion.⁹³

Nor was the German press innocent in this regard. Some of the smaller papers, particularly in South Germany, launched outrageous attacks on England beginning with the Boer War and continued them through World War I. The difference between the two presses, according to Fay, was that the German press criticized its own government as scurrilously as it did England, but, because few English

⁹²Fay, The Origins of..., II, 558.

⁹³S. B. Fay, "Pre-War Diplomacy and the European Press," Current History, XXXII, No. 2 (November, 1930), 213.

diplomats read German, they were aware only of the samples of German journalism reprinted in the Times.⁹⁴ British diplomats who were most accurate in their evaluations of German public opinion such as Frank Lascelles and Edward Goschen, both ambassadors to Berlin were dismissed because of the press comment contradicting their reports. Fairfax Cartwright, British ambassador to Munich and later to Vienna, on the other hand, extracted the most Anglophobe comments that could be found in the German press and forwarded them to London. British officials had more faith in Cartwright's reports because their contents compared favorably with what appeared in the English press than in the more truthful dispatches from Goschen and Lascelles. Suspicion of Germany was the overriding characteristic of British thought between 1907 and 1914. The press attacks which gave birth to the suspicions, Fay maintained, went far in explaining the prompt British entry into the war in 1914.⁹⁵

Although Professor Fay is generally considered America's outstanding revisionist historian, he was not the only scholar who attacked the Versailles theory of war guilt. He was not even the first. As early as 1922, the journalist, Albert J. Nock, charged the Treaty of Versailles with gross inequity. Propounding what at that date was an extremely unpopular and "radical" view, Nock

⁹⁴Fay, Current History, XXXII, No. 2, 215.

⁹⁵Ibid., pp. 216-17.

might properly be called the first of the moderate revisionists. He did not assume for a moment that Germany had been innocent in 1914, an assertion Barnes and other scholars defended. She was, however, "far, very far from being the only guilty party."⁹⁶ Since Germany was not solely responsible, the verdict of Versailles was not only indefensible, but it was economically, morally and legally a farce.

Nock cited the figures on military and naval expenditures to refute the Allied claim that the Entente was unprepared for the war. In 1914, the combined armaments expenditures of England, France and Russia totaled \$142 million compared to \$92 million for the Central Powers. Furthermore, he argued, the suppressed telegram from the British ambassador in Vienna telling of the substance of the Austrian ultimatum belied Lord Grey's assertion that the Entente nations were taken by surprise by the action of the Dual Monarchy.⁹⁷

Nock compared two statements by Lloyd George which "put the lie" to the Entente myth of war guilt. The first concerned what the later English prime minister called "the most dangerous conspiracy ever plotted against the liberty of nations; carefully, skillfully, insidiously, clandestinely planned...with ruthless, cynical determin-

⁹⁶Albert J. Nock, The Myth of a Guilty Nation (New York: B. W. Huebsch, Inc., 1922), p. 6.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 25.

ation." The Prime Minister's second statement was delivered December 23, 1920 after the hatred bred by war had subsided and rendered propaganda unnecessary:

The more one reads memoirs and books written in various countries on what happened before the first of August, 1914...the more one realizes that no one head of affairs meant war at that stage...A discussion, I have no doubt, would have averted it.⁹⁸

Nock took to task the official British wartime apology for joining Russia and France. England's relationship to Belgium revealed no obligation to protect Belgian territorial integrity, merely to respect it herself. "Belgium was not thought of by Asquith's cabinet before August 2, 1914. She was brought in then as a means of making the war go down with the British people."⁹⁹ Revelations by the Soviet government in 1918, Nock argued, should at least reopen the question of responsibility. As early as 1912, Poincaré promised that Russia would have the support of France in the event of a Balkan war in which Austria was supported by Germany. Isvolsky, in the same year, received similar assurances from Lord Grey and King George.

Nock succinctly stated his interpretation of the origins of the war as follows:

A train of gunpowder...had been laid from Belgrade through Paris and London to St. Petersburg;...the engine of that train was Pan-Slavism. A spark in the Balkans would cause the train to

⁹⁸Nock, pp. 38-40.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 46.

flash into flames throughout its entire length.¹⁰⁰

Albert J. Nock will never be accorded the place of a Fay, a Schmitt or a Barnes as an analyst of the causes of World War I, but as one who provided an early insight to the American public that the blacks and whites of Versailles were after all greys, he deserves mention in any study of the historiography of the war's origins.

After the publication of Fay's classic in 1928, American historians began increasingly to apply a "moderate revisionist" interpretation to the origins of the war. No longer was it only the "Twelve Days" which were necessary to understand the world's greatest cataclysm to date; historians showed an increased interest in the indirect or fundamental causes dating generally from the French Revolution, but more particularly from 1871.

Walter C. Langsam of Columbia University is illustrative of this trend. In his The World Since 1914, Langsam wrote that the morbid action of the psychopathic Bosnian was merely the occasion for the war. First among the fundamental or real causes which provided the tinder for Princip's spark were the twin curses nationalism and irredentism, the legacies of the French Revolution and the Age of Metternich.¹⁰¹

The diplomats at the Congress of Vienna, according

¹⁰⁰Nock, p. 103.

¹⁰¹Walter C. Langsam, The World Since 1914 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1933), p. 3.

to Langsam, shaped the course of European politics between 1815 and 1914. There, the doctrines of nationalism and democracy had been repudiated. By 1914, many of the territorial maladjustments of the shortsighted statesmen had been rectified, but several nationalistic sore spots remained plus a few new ones, including Alsace and Lorraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Trieste and Trentino, the "polygot" character of the Dual Monarchy and the rivalries over "Europe's sick man."

Suppressed nationalism, Langsam noted, was no more or less dangerous to peace than exaggerated nationalism. To be a patriot in nineteenth century Europe meant to scoff at foreign cultures and view one's own nationality as a "chosen people." While Treitschke and Bernhardt lent a special flavor to German patriotism, "the Germans at worst suffered from only a slightly more severe attack of nationalism than did England and France."¹⁰²

The vogue of militarism was another underlying cause of World War I. Langsam defined a militaristic state as one in which the people permitted military power to overawe civil power. By 1914, all European states could be so classified. Military alliances were sought first by Bismark and later by all leaders until Europe was gradually divided into two hostile camps. "Both sides were strong...Each was ready to resort to sword-rattling to intimidate the other. Should either group call the other's bluff, war would

¹⁰²Langsam, p. 5.

be inevitable."¹⁰³ The immediate affect of the crystallization of the alliance systems was a series of international crises beginning with the Moroccan incident of 1905 and culminating in the assassination of Francis Ferdinand. With each crisis, armaments soared until by 1914, there were more than four million men under arms. By then, it was obvious that another crisis could not be weathered peaceably.

The third fundamental cause, as Langsam viewed the origins of the war, was economic rivalry and imperialism. The world's history during the nineteenth century was characterized by a search for markets and sources of raw materials which were necessitated by the Industrial Revolution. It was Germany's misfortune to appear on the imperialistic scene late after the world had been divided, but she made great strides in spite of her handicap, and by the 1880's there was widespread apprehension that Great Britain might be outdistanced by the upstart. "England suffered a veritable 'made in Germany' complex."¹⁰⁴

The fourth underlying cause for the war was the lack of any machinery to control international relations. The worst of the "international anarchy" was secret diplomacy. Where cabinets before had been kept informed of the international situation, they were now kept in the dark. Thus it was that Sir Edward Grey on August 3, 1914 could deny

¹⁰³Langsam, p. 9.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., pp. 12-13.

that Commons had any restriction of action, while in actual fact, there were commitments of the utmost importance to France. The German ambassador to Paris, von Schön, accurately described the European situation when he said, "Peace remains at the mercy of an accident."¹⁰⁵

After the assassination at Sarajevo, a result of the historic Austro-Serbian enmity, Austrian officials suspected Serbia of gross neglect if not connivance. Austria, Langsam maintained, believed that unless severe retribution was demanded, Russo-Serbian subversive machinations against the tottering Dual Monarchy would continue. The Austrian plan was to frame an "unacceptable" note to which Russia, as in 1908, would yield, and then strike quickly so that the war might be localized.¹⁰⁶ On July 5, Germany endorsed the plan but cautioned against making unreasonable demands on Serbia. By the time Germany was shown the precise terms of the ultimatum, it was too late to modify it, and she could not easily retract her pledge of July 5. The Austrian declaration of war, according to Langsam, was made in the sincere belief that it was the only way to save the Dual Monarchy from extinction.

While Germany did her utmost to restrain Austria, Russia prepared in secrecy and haste. The general Russian mobilization of July 30 forced Germany into a declaration of war which drew in all of the European powers. "Who was

¹⁰⁵Langsam, p. 14.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., pp. 16-17.

to blame is hard to say, but in every belligerent capital, the people went wild with joy."¹⁰⁷

Erik Achorn¹⁰⁸ adopted a similar thesis to the one propounded by Fay and Langsam but with certain modifications. To Achorn, the fundamental or real causes of the war appeared to be four in number: economic factors, the affect of universal military service, secret diplomacy and the rival alliance systems. In addition to these four "basic" causes, there were seven other forces which served to intensify international hostilities: (1) the spread of nationalism and the so-called dictates of national honor; (2) the nationalistic trend in history; (3) the jingoistic press; (4) irredentism in all nations; (5) international anarchy, the outstanding characteristic of which was the assimilation and application of the ideas of Darwin and the ethics of Machiavelli by politicians in all nations; (6) exaltation of war; and (7) mob psychology.¹⁰⁹

The majority of Europeans in 1914 wished for peace. In Great Britain, the people were apathetic to international affairs. Although official France wished the restoration of Alsace, the peasantry was largely unconcerned. In Russia, the great masses were unaware of international relations. A numerically insignificant,

¹⁰⁷Langsam, pp. 20-21.

¹⁰⁸Achorn was a professor of European history at Harvard.

¹⁰⁹Erik Achorn, European Civilization and Politics Since 1815 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1934), pp. 384-86.

although strong, minority was involved in the activities of the Serbian secret societies dedicated to the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy. One could easily visualize the feelings of Vienna, however. "Imagine the feelings in Washington if Mexico decided to annex the American Southwest."¹¹⁰

German officials feared the envy of Great Britain, the vengeance of France and the overwhelming preponderance of the Slavic hordes. The idea was current in Germany that the three rivals had leagued together under Edward VII to throw an "iron ring" around Germany and keep her from her "rightful place in the sun." Achorn condemned those who accepted the loose-mouthed utterances of the Pan-Germans as credible evidence of responsible policy. Nietzsche, Treitschke and Bernhardi helped create an atmosphere and a public sentiment detrimental to the peace of the world, but Achorn noted, there were similar exponents in every nation in the world.¹¹¹

Since it was not the masses of the belligerent nations that precipitated the war, Achorn next analysed the position of each of the individuals close to the center of things in 1914. Grey knew England but not the continent, and because of this, he was unable to see beyond the principles of British policy laid down by his predecessors. Poincaré, a "Lorrainer of '71," may not have willed the war,

¹¹⁰ Achorn, pp. 378-88.

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 388-90.

but he believed it was inevitable which was just as bad. The Kaiser was a "pathological" case for whose actions neurosis was the only suitable explanation. He surrounded himself with incapable advisers among whom was Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, a "well-intentioned bureaucrat overshadowed by militarists." Francis Joseph, like the Tsar in Russia, was incapable of ably discharging his duties which was his contribution to causing the war. Sazonov and Berchtold, the "ardent chauvinists" who occupied the center of the stage, directed affairs in their respective countries.¹¹²

The assassination of Francis Ferdinand was merely the occasion for the war. If he had not been murdered, there would have been no Austro-Serbian war and consequently no World War in the summer of 1914 or perhaps ever. Clearly, Achorn argued, Serbia was guilty in countenancing the anti-Austrian activity that led to the assassination. Serbia was an "accessory after the fact." Those who believed the Serbian cause was just, Achorn maintained, must accept assassination as a rightful means toward attaining national ends.¹¹³

Because Austria did not adequately prepare her case for the ultimatum in the accompanying dossier, international public opinion did not realize Serbia was the guilty party and looked on Austria as an aggressor.

¹¹²Achorn, pp. 390-93.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 397.

Throughout the "Twelve Days," Achorn contended, Germany was dragged along the path to the abyss by her ally who presented her with one fait accompli after another. Germany, however, laid herself open to such treatment by her July 5 promises and her insistence that the quarrel concerned only the Dual Monarchy and Serbia.¹¹⁴

Assessing relative responsibility, Achorn pointed out that since the primary cause for the outbreak of the war was the Austro-Serbian quarrel and since high Serb officials shared in responsibility for the first blow, Serbia shared heavily in the blame for the larger conflict. Because of her actions, the Dual Monarchy shouldered some of the blame. She was, in contradistinction to Russia, however, fighting for her life. Because the Dual Monarchy was Germany's only dependable ally, the latter, perhaps foolishly, backed her. When the war became imminent, however, Germany made sincere efforts to avert the calamity. Russia was responsible because she encouraged anti-Austrian propaganda from Belgrade and prompted Serbia to reject the ultimatum. France was guilty in that she, as much as Germany, tendered a "blank check" to her ally. Without assurances of French support, Russia would not have mobilized. Grey's "unofficial" promises to France bound England to her across-Channel neighbor and Russia although Belgium was used as the selling point. If England's position

¹¹⁴Achorn, pp. 399-400.

had been made clear, there might not have been a war.¹¹⁵

That the moderate revisionist thesis of the importance of fundamental causes vis-a-vis immediate causes is as tenable in the 1950's as it was in the 1920's is borne out by a number of contemporary historians. C. E. Black and E. C. Helmreich looked to what they labeled the "spirit of the age" for the real reasons behind the outbreak of hostilities in 1914. After 1815, this spirit manifested itself in an adulation of progress and a trend toward materialism in which the state took over many of the functions formerly exercised by the Church. Nationalism, which filled spiritual needs heretofore taken care of by religion, was also characteristic of the age preceding the war. Nationalism nurtured a new liberalism brought on by the victory of the bourgeoisie over the aristocracy in which personal liberties were sacrificed to the national interest. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sovereignty versus interdependence loomed as a problem to be resolved, and the scramble for colonial possessions was but a manifestation of the conflict. But imperialism failed of its major objective-- economic and political security. Unable to find security imperialistically, the European nation-states turned to alliances, a trend which culminated in the Triple

¹¹⁵Achorn, pp. 405-08.

Alliance and Triple Entente.¹¹⁶

It was futile, the authors contended, to try to fix the blame for the war on any one nation. The war was the product of the age. Its real origins lay far back in the past and to view it in any other way was short-sighted. Because of the rivalry of the Great Powers, an Austrian-Serbian clash developed into a great international war over how the continent was to be organized and how the balance of power should be weighted.¹¹⁷

Ferdinand Schevill of Chicago University, whom H. E. Barnes somewhat erroneously aligned with himself as an uncompromising revisionist, provides a logical transition from the moderate exponent of the new interpretation to the more uncompromising revisionist. In his A History of Europe from the Reformation to the Present Day first published in 1925 but revised in 1954, Schevill carefully distinguished between remote and immediate causes. For the serious historian, he wrote, the fundamental causes were far more important than immediate causes, despite the importance attached to the latter by the general public.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶C. E. Black and E. C. Helmreich, Twentieth Century Europe (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), pp. 23-25.

Black is a professor of European history at Princeton University, and Professor Helmreich is on the faculty of Bowdoin College.

¹¹⁷Ibid., pp. 55-56.

¹¹⁸Ferdinand Schevill, A History of Europe from the Reformation to the Present Day (2d ed. revised; New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1954), p. 705.

To anyone versed in the processes of history, the Chicago professor wrote, it was obvious that an epochal event like the World War could not have sprung from other than the spirit and forms assumed by a changing civilization. He enumerated the fundamental causes as follows: (1) Europe had evolved into a body of competitive states, a process which had begun with the Reformation; (2) Nationalism was exaggerated in all European states; (3) The Industrial Revolution gave rise to the third cause, imperialism, which often took the form of a "civilizing mission" to extend material benefits to less fortunate nations; (4) The export of capital and the accompanying search for new sources of raw materials and markets also could be traced to the Industrial Revolution; (5) Since each of the European powers felt war was a legitimate tool of policy, each desired a strong army and navy which led to competition in armaments; (6) The alliance systems replaced the Concert of Europe; and (7) The European mind was diseased and dominated by fears and hatreds.¹¹⁹

Discussing the immediate causes of the war, Schevill discarded any view that held one man or group of men responsible. "All five powers immediately involved, Austria, Russia, France, Great Britain and Germany must assume some measure of responsibility."¹²⁰ Early in

¹¹⁹Shevill, pp. 705-07.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 708.

July, 1914, Germany worked toward localizing the war, but on July 28, realizing the Russian attitude made such a policy unrealistic, Germany took a new stand. On the one hand, she warned Russia not to mobilize generally, and on the other, she brought strong pressure to bear on Vienna to accept mediation. Unfortunately, it was too late. Following Russia's initiative, the other powers mobilized, and war was a certainty.¹²¹

Despite his general condemnation of Russian activities during the critical "Twelve Days," Schevill warned that it is a short view to try to explain the causes of World War I on the basis of moves made during July and August, 1914. At best, those moves may be said to have caused the war at that particular moment. That the war was prepared generations before 1914 was the only view worthy of the serious historian. The war was a plunge into disaster by civilization owing to the growth of certain unfortunate trends which the leaders in 1914 had neither the will nor the wisdom to control.¹²²

So wrote the moderate revisionists, moderate when compared to the Barnes brand of revisionism. The outstanding characteristic of these scholars was their recognition of the importance in looking beyond the events of the summer of 1914 for the real reasons for the war. Most of them would agree that the diplomatic

¹²¹Shevill, pp. 712-13.

¹²²Ibid., pp. 714-15.

moves made in 1914 did no more than start a conflict which had been brewing since at least 1871, or perhaps as some would have it, since the French Revolution or the Reformation. Each of the scholars considered above can be labeled "moderates" on the basis of what has been generally accepted as the correct thesis of World War I responsibility, although several of them, notably Nock and Schevill, were viewed as "radicals" in the years in which their works were published.

Needless to say, the lines between the moderate and more unyielding revisionists are not as sharp as this study might indicate. Some of Fay's interpretations, which today are considered quite conservative, were, in 1928, viewed as the worst kind of radicalism. Although Barnes likened the Schevill interpretation to his own in 1926, from a 1958 perspective, the intellectual relationship between Fay and Schevill seems much closer than that between Schevill and the rabid revisionists. While the Barnes "school" may have had many disciples in the 1920's, few scholars can be found today who accept the Barnes thesis which is characterized primarily by absolutes, the blacks and whites so evident in the writings of the earlier students of responsibility.

Barnes admittedly accepted the Entente version of war guilt until he was awakened from his "dogmatic slumbers" by the 1920-1921 periodical articles by Fay. "Professor Fay's demolition of the 'Potsdam myth' was equiva-

lent to the loss of Santa Claus in my youth."¹²³ Barnes' purpose in writing was to show that there was no basis for the Treaty of Versailles since Article 231 was a farce. The work also represented a protest against the Dawes Plan which had merely reduced the penalty on an "innocent man."¹²⁴ Barnes predicted the course later taken under the Lausanne settlement of 1932 when reparations were terminated, but not, however, for the reason he had suggested.

Like his more moderate colleagues, Barnes recognized that no adequate understanding of the war's origins could be limited to a study of the diplomatic exchanges between June 28 and August 3, 1914. Furthermore, he argued, a study of the diplomacy of the generation preceeding the war would not suffice to solve the problem of responsibility. The biological, psychological, sociological, economic and political causes of war in general must first be understood. Only after one recognized the inherent qualities in mankind which were conducive to war could one hope to view the diplomacy of 1871 through 1914 in a proper perspective.

Having disposed of these, the "basic" causes of all wars, the sociologist-historian enumerated the remote causes of the World War under four broad and interrelated

¹²³Harry E. Barnes, The Genesis of the World War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), p. xii.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 705.

headings: economic and commercial rivalry, nationalism and patriotism, military and naval armaments and the rival alliance systems.¹²⁵

Economically, Great Britain bore the greatest guilt. The Industrial Revolution hit Germany, and in manufacturing, commerce and shipping, she challenged the erstwhile British monopoly and evoked animosities heretofore reserved for France. Moreover, Germany was gradually replacing Russia as Great Britain's greatest competitor in the Near East. The term, "guilt," however, was not correctly applied to either England or Germany in this instance since the former merely wished to retain the status quo against the ambitions of the latter.¹²⁶ Nationalistically, none of the European states had a clean bill of health. Perhaps, Barnes suggested, France was most guilty, but her guilt was merely one of degree. Militaristically, Germany was no better nor worse than the other European powers. The German Army Bill of 1913, generally credited by Entente historians with starting the armaments race anew, was, in fact, implemented sixteen days after the French Army Law was laid before the Chamber of Deputies.¹²⁷ After 1902 when the Italo-French conversations had the affect of extricating Italy from the Triple Alliance, the systems were not equal. During the decade immediately preceding

¹²⁵Barnes, The Genesis of..., p. 45.

¹²⁶Ibid., pp. 49-50.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 66.

the war, the Triple Alliance had become an "empty shell" even for purposes of defense, while the Entente grew steadily stronger. It was no wonder, Barnes commented, that Germany balked at suggestions of armament control. "The encirclement theory had been vindicated."¹²⁸

Of all possible sources of friction in Europe between 1871 and 1914, the French desire for révanche was the most important just ahead of the Russian desire to control the Straits. Poincaré and other French militarists exploited the Russian desire for the Straits, equating it with the French demand for the restoration of Alsace and Lorraine. Another source of unrest was the Moroccan question in which Germany did no more than demand an international conference before the partition of the North African territory. The chief significance of the Moroccan question was that it strengthened the bonds of the Triple Entente.

Barnes, however, pointed to the Bosnian crisis of 1908 as the most significant of all single events in the diplomacy which led to the war. Repudiating her historic position as protector of the Balkan Slavs, Russia, through her foreign minister, Isvolsky, proposed to Austria-Hungary that she annex the Serbian provinces in return for Austria's support in securing the Straits from the "Sick Man." Austria forthwith annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, but to Isvolsky's chagrin, Britain prevented Russia from attaining

¹²⁸Barnes, The Genesis of..., pp. 70-73.

her end of the bargain. Isvolsky then secured the appointment as Russian ambassador to Paris where he immediately began to "plot" with the French Révanchards led by Poincaré. The French Prime Minister and the Russian Ambassador designed a joint program through which the Straits might be secured for Russia, and Alsace and Lorraine would be restored to France. The negotiations between Isvolsky and Poincaré, according to Barnes, constituted the most important "phase" in the genesis of the World War.¹²⁹

The basic thread connecting the underlying and immediate causes, according to Barnes, was the Russian desire to control the Straits. When Isvolsky joined hands with the "Poincaré clique," the peace of Europe was threatened. To insure permanence in his bellicose foreign policy, Poincaré resigned the premiership in favor of the presidency. Complete cooperation between Russia and France was made certain when Delcassé replaced Georges Louis as French ambassador in St. Petersburg. England was brought into line by the Grey-Chambon correspondence in 1912, and the Anglo-Russian naval convention in 1914 set the stage for the World War. All that remained was the casus belli which was quickened when, in 1914, the Tsar received the Serbian premier and encouraged Serbian nationalistic ambitions, promising Russian aid in the event of war. The casus belli was short in coming.

¹²⁹Barnes, The Genesis of..., pp. 83-87.

The Serbian reply to the Austrian ultimatum, according to Barnes, was drafted in form if not in detail in the French foreign office. The reply which ostensibly accepted the Austrian demands, was in reality an outright rejection. Still, Austria was not justified in her rash action.¹³⁰

Germany, Barnes admitted, did tender her ally a "blank check" on July 5, but it was not a blanket endorsement of all future Austrian actions. It referred only to the Serbian question. When Russian mobilization threatened a general European war, Germany pressed Austria to reconsider her action, but Berchtold was irreconcilable until July 31 when it was too late because of the "fatal" Russian mobilization. The Austrian war on Serbia did not necessitate a European war as was so often charged. On the contrary, it was the "unjustifiable" Russian intervention that produced the wider conflict.¹³¹

Germany, Barnes maintained, had absolutely nothing to gain from a European war in 1914; she had everything to gain from peace. The Anglo-German rivalry had for the moment subsided after agreements concluded in 1914; the German imperialistic venture in the Balkans, the Bagdad Railroad, was running smoothly. The best indication of German public opinion, the 1912 elections, proved that the German masses were pacifically inclined. In that

¹³⁰Barnes, The Genesis of..., pp. 221-23.

¹³¹Ibid., p. 224.

year, eight of eleven million votes went to candidates from the Center, Radical and Social Democratic parties, each of which was inalterably opposed to militarism. Although the Kaiser looked upon Serbia as a "band of robbers that must be seized for its crimes,"¹³² the German ruling classes generally opposed war. William II favored only a punitive war against Serbia. In granting his "blank check," he emulated Poincaré's 1912 and 1914 guarantees to Russia, the difference being that Poincaré gave his later assurances knowing full well a European war would result.¹³³

Germany worked steadily for peace throughout the crisis of 1914. Although mobilization was acknowledged by Germany, France and Russia as tantamount to a declaration of war, Germany did not declare war until forty-eight hours after what amounted to the Russian declaration. The Kaiser then tried to localize the conflict in the East by obtaining French and English neutrality. Two days before Germany's invasion of Belgium, however, France and Great Britain had promised Russia support. More than any other European diplomat, William II endeavored to preserve the peace in the critical days of July and August, 1914.¹³⁴ The responsibility for the hasty Russian mobilization rested on the shoulders of the Tsar, Isvolsky and Sazonov

¹³²Barnes, The Genesis of..., p. 250.

¹³³Ibid., p. 252.

¹³⁴Ibid., pp. 300-03.

who, in 1916, admitted that the war was brought on by France and Russia to humiliate Germany.¹³⁵

The accession of Poincaré to the premiership in 1912 had committed France to a program of revenge. By October, 1914, England was congenial to the general program which called, in addition to the restoration of Alsace and Lorraine, for the seizure of the Saar Basin and the creation of an independent Rhineland under French protection. Because French obligations to Russia under the Dual Alliance were not even debated in the Chamber of Deputies before plunging into war, Barnes charged that responsibility for the French actions rested solely upon the shoulders of Poincaré and a few of his lieutenants. The autocracy over foreign affairs was more stringent in France than in Russia, Austria or Germany in 1914.¹³⁶ Although Russian mobilization actually precipitated the war, France was equally guilty. She was not bound under the terms of the Dual Alliance; Russian prior mobilization released her from her obligations, a fact Poincaré kept carefully hidden from the French masses in 1914.¹³⁷

The key to British action, Barnes maintained, was the determination to go to war if France did. Grey himself was for peace in the "abstract," but he promised France and Russia aid and led Germany to believe England

¹³⁵Barnes, The Genesis of..., p. 373.

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 438.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 441.

would remain neutral. Great Britain, by the end of July, however, refused to pledge her neutrality even in the face of German promises to keep clear of Belgium and France. Since the offer had been made, England was not bound by her Entente commitments. Belgium was no issue except for world opinion. The case of Grey in 1914, Barnes asserted, was illustrative of the "disasters which befall a country which entrusts its destiny to a well-meaning but vacillating and indecisive man and an ignorant, stupid and naive diplomat."¹³⁸

That the Barnes thesis of war guilt was not acceptable even to some other revisionists was illustrated in a review of his book by Charles A. Beard, a moderate exponent of the new interpretation. Accepting Barnes' view of the remote causes of the war, Beard parted company with the uncompromising revisionist when the transcendent importance of personalities in his work became apparent. From the incisive Barnes account, Beard wrote, the "Sunday school theory," that which maintained three innocent boys, Russia, France and England, were suddenly accosted by two villains, Germany and Austria, who had long been plotting cruel deeds in the dark, was "exploded."¹³⁹ No "sane" person could feel the guilt clause of the peace

¹³⁸Barnes, The Genesis of..., pp. 579-80.

¹³⁹Charles A. Beard, "Heroes and Villians of the War," Review of The Genesis of the World War, by Harry Elmer Barnes, Current History, XXIV, No. 5 (August, 1926), 733.

treaty was just. Beyond that, all was debatable. "If there is peril in the attempt to enforce the Versailles theory of responsibility...there is equal danger in attempting to whitewash the German ruling classes."¹⁴⁰

From the materials on hand in 1926, Beard wrote that it was clear that the German government, egged on by the Kaiser, a "Divine Right" monarch angry over the death of a member of the Hapsburg ruling house, granted Austria a "blank check." That Entente politicians refused opportunities by which peace might have been maintained was true, but the evidence did not substantiate Barnes' contention that the attitude of the German governing class materially advanced the cause of peace in 1914.¹⁴¹

Bethmann-Hollweg and von Jagow were no better nor worse than Poincaré, Grey or Sazonov. Barnes' effort to convince Americans that European quarrels should be viewed with open eyes was commendable, but "to shift heroes and villains only confuses the issue."¹⁴²

In a review entitled "Menckenized History," Barnes was taken to task for succumbing to the temptation to "debunk" simply because that was the literary vogue.

Vociferous and sweeping denunciations of existing beliefs, customs, standards and institutions is the current mode, and 'revisionism' is merely one of its phases...Never before has the fretful energy of the slam-bang and slap-

¹⁴⁰Beard, Current History, XXIV, No. 5, 733.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 734.

¹⁴²Ibid., p. 735.

dash radicals been so amply rewarded.¹⁴³

The only value of the book, according to the reviewer, was that it might stir some historians out of complacency so that the problem of war responsibility might be considered by someone other than a "revisionist." The book, which was not the intended "bombshell" but a "dud," was not history. It was a violent harangue to a jury which was asked to shift the blame from the defendants to the accusers. Barnes, the reviewer charged, was overladen with his material and could not intelligently use it.¹⁴⁴

In 1927, Barnes maintained that the revisionist view had become thoroughly vindicated, particularly with respect to the guilt of France, Russia and Serbia. While the case against those powers was materially strengthened, Barnes contended that the case against the Dual Monarchy had become less strong. Austria faced three alternatives in 1914: acquiescence in gradual extinction, securing Serbian submission to the ultimatum or war against Serbia. The most damaging fact to the Entente thesis of Austrian war guilt to come to light since the publication of The Genesis of the World War, Barnes maintained, was proof of the Austrian promise to Russia to refrain from dismembering Serbia permanently, a fact Sazonov

¹⁴³W. J. Ghent, "Menckenized History," Review of The Genesis of the World War, by H. E. Barnes, The Outlook, CXLIII, No. 1 (June 23, 1926), 286.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 287.

carefully concealed from St. Petersburg and Paris.¹⁴⁵ Barnes abandoned the position he had assumed in a 1924 periodical article wherein he placed Austria first in relative responsibility.¹⁴⁶ In 1927, Austria was fourth after Serbia, Russia and France in that order.

After it became evident that Germany could no longer be considered solely guilty of precipitating the war, Barnes wrote, the defenders of the wartime verdict abandoned their defense of Article 231 and based their indictment on the charge that Germany was principally responsible for creating the conditions in which the war arose in 1914. Germany was in no way exonerated from her share of the blame in creating the fundamental causes, but far from first in relative responsibility, Barnes argued, she stood with England as least guilty.¹⁴⁷ Russia was the one great power immediately responsible for the war. Her decision for mobilization was made July 24, a full three days before the Austrian declaration of war on Serbia. In spite of her precipitate mobilization, Russia's position might have been defensible had her's been an "honorable cause," but it was not unless the forcible seizure of the Straits was considered honorable.

¹⁴⁵Harry E. Barnes, "A Revised Verdict on the Guilt of Nations for the World War," Current History, XXVI, No. 5 (August, 1927), 684-85.

¹⁴⁶See Harry E. Barnes, "Assessing the Blame for the World War," Current History, XX, No. 2 (May, 1924), 171-95.

¹⁴⁷Barnes, Current History, XXVI, No. 5, 685.

Barnes' 1927 opinion of Grey was somewhat improved over that expressed in his book a year earlier. Neither was the British Foreign Minister the knight in shining armor portrayed by Schmitt nor the Machiavelli claimed by the most Anglophobe historians. Grey and his advisors were constant sources of encouragement to the French and Russians, although "probably inadvertently."¹⁴⁸ If it was in the British national interest to enter the conflict on the Entente side, the British documents proved that Grey and company played their cards with great skill. If, on the other hand, they wished to avoid war, the English diplomats behaved with "the utmost--even criminal--stupidity." Had Grey chosen to declare England's position publically, there would probably not have been a war.¹⁴⁹ Serbia, France and Russia, Barnes asserted, were the only states that desired a general European war; Austria wished only a punitive war; Italy, England and Germany opposed any kind of conflict, and after July 26, 1914, "Germany withdrew her support from Austria."¹⁵⁰

Europe, Barnes maintained in 1927, was still governed by wartime prejudices and hatreds. It was, he noted, somewhat incongruous to attempt the erection of Locarno on the foundations of Versailles. The chief

¹⁴⁸Barnes, Current History, XXVI, No. 5, 693-94.

¹⁴⁹Harry E. Barnes, "England Arraigns Herself," The Nation, CXXV, No. 324 (August 17, 1927), 163.

¹⁵⁰Barnes, Current History, XXVI, No. 5, 697.

obstacles to peace, as he prophetically viewed them in 1927, were the South Tyrol, Macedonia, the Polish Corridor, Silesia, Bessarbia, a dismembered Hungary, the forbidden Austro-German customs union and an outlawed Russia, all "products of a peace treaty founded on flagrant lies."¹⁵¹

Barnes was not the sole exponent of the uncompromising revisionist position, although he was the most productive. Perhaps as vocal in his defense of Germany was Francis Neilson, an English editor transplanted on American shores. As early as 1923, Neilson urged that scholars in all nations search deep into the workings of the pre-war European system to discover what it was that made it possible for "ministers and diplomats to wreck a continent and destroy its youth."¹⁵² At the start of the war, Neilson noted, the American people had been relatively open-minded concerning the causes of the war. The change had been a direct result of the many-sided efforts of the war propagandists to instill in the American mind one "fact"--sole German war guilt.

Russia, Neilson contended, was immediately responsible for the war. No matter how much Austria was to blame for her obstinacy in refusing to accept the Serbian reply to her ultimatum, Russian intervention rendered any attempt at peaceful solution impossible. In the

¹⁵¹Barnes, Current History, XXVI, No. 5, 697-98.

¹⁵²Francis Neilson, Duty to Civilization (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1923), pp. 11-12.

end, after Austria accepted the proposal for mediation, it was Russia, not Germany, that drew England, France and Belgium into the conflict.¹⁵³

Neilson preached the necessity of reopening the question of war guilt. Bismark and Gladstone, he asserted, had agreed that the seizure of Alsace and Lorraine by Germany in 1871 was detrimental to the peace of Europe. The military party in Prussia was responsible for the terms of 1871, and the Entente militarists were responsible for the terms of 1914. "If the peace of 1871 was a danger to Europe, what sort of danger," Neilson asked, "is the Peace of Paris?" The only way another European conflagration could be avoided was for the Entente nations to admit their "error" and draft a new peace treaty--one without a guilt clause.¹⁵⁴

Reviewing the Gooch-Temperley collection of British documents then being published, William L. Langer of Clark University added his voice to those of the uncompromising revisionists charging France with responsibility. The British documents, he asserted, strengthened earlier suspicions of Poincaré and pointed to his actions as the least savory of any of the principal 1914 European statesmen.

The French President's rejection of Grey's proposal for "direct conversations" between St. Petersburg and

¹⁵³Neilson, pp. 83-87.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 114-15.

Vienna as "dangerous" was, according to Langer, at the root of the problem. Poincaré advocated outside intervention, fashioning himself from the very outset the champion of Entente solidarity. He repeatedly expressed the need to keep Sazonov firm. The attitude adopted by Poincaré and, at his behest, Sazonov was that Russia could not back down. France's policy, Langer asserted, was cleverly and tactfully designed to make a good impression at home and, above all, in England. France took her stand at the outset and held to it consistently throughout. Her policy left the Central Powers only two alternatives--humiliation or war.¹⁵⁵

As illustrated above, all of the post-1920 American scholars concerned with war responsibility were not revisionists. In the early 1920's, in fact, the diplomatic evidence to support such a position was relatively meagre. Fay's 1920-1921 articles in the American Historical Review and the archival revelations flooding Europe convinced increasing numbers of American historians that the blacks and whites painted by the Entente apologists were at best greys, but still few Americans were willing to attack the foundation of the Versailles Treaty--the war guilt clause. In the early 1920's, a few writers, notably journalists like Nock and Neilson, sounded the note upon which many professional historians soon

¹⁵⁵William L. Langer, "French Policy in 1914," Saturday Review of Literature, III, No. 40 (April 30, 1927), 781-82.

wrote. As the documentary evidence concerning the origins of the war and memoirs of the wartime statesmen became more profuse, the number propounding a revisionist thesis grew proportionately until by the mid-1930's, the "moderates," the most notable of whom was Fay, claimed a majority of American historians as followers.

There were some who ignored the latest documentary evidence, labelling it German or Bolshevik propaganda, and continued to write on the basis of the evidence offered in the wartime belligerent apologies. As late as 1930, it was evident with the appearance of Schmitt's two volume work on the war's background that an interpretation other than revisionist might be gleaned from the post-war disclosures. Schmitt was joined by Seymour, Florinsky and others who cited the latest findings in support of the antithesis of the revisionist position.

That the moderate revisionist view of the war's origins had gained the upper hand by the 1930's was evidenced by its espousal by most general historians concerned with the period. Of these, Schevill, whose work was originally published in the 1920's and revised in each succeeding decade, Walter Langsam and Erik Achorn of the 1930's and Black and Helmreich of the 1950's have been examined and found to adhere generally to the moderate revisionist theory of World War I responsibility.

CONCLUSION

In the United States, the controversy over war responsibility passed through four loosely-defined phases. The first phase witnessed the circulation of the "colored books" and secondary sources authored by Europeans designed to sway American opinion in favor of one side or the other. The ideas embodied in the initial belligerent apologies had been current among Europeans for several decades and were similar to the suspicions that gave birth to the "war scares" of 1875 and 1877. To the French mind, German militarism, personified in von Moltke and William II, was bent on conquering the world as it had Alsace and Lorraine. In England, Germany was feared as a colonial and economic rival and recognized relatively early as a power which, if left alone, might challenge the virtual British monopoly in the Near East and on the high seas. To Russian statesmen after 1908, Germany was seen as the driving force behind Austrian moves in the Balkans where a conflict with Pan-Slavism was imminent. In each of the early Entente apologies, Germany played the villain's role.

The German defense, on the other hand, was not directed at any one of the Allied powers but at all three collectively. The fear of révanche appeared vindicated by the Boulanger crisis in France. When Russia shifted her interests to the Balkans and the Near East after her

humiliating defeat by Japan, concern was expressed in some German quarters lest all Europe fall under the domination of the Slavic hordes. After consummation of the Entente Cordiale, Germany feared Great Britain, but with the death of the Germanophobe, Edward VII, and the agreement delimiting spheres in the Near East, Anglo-German tensions were ostensibly eased, and officials felt Great Britain might remain neutral in any future war. Nevertheless in the hastily-prepared early statements, German apologists, for want of a better scapegoat, exploited the "encirclement theory" to exonerate Germany of the blame for causing the war. The motivations for the Entente actions were the French desire for revenge, Russian aggressive aims in the Near East and English envy of German commercial prowess.

In the second phase of the controversy, the basic arguments were so contorted and exaggerated that each side was charged with all conceivable barbarities. Historians the world over had lost the power to reason out the war's origins. From 1914 through 1920, American war guilt scholars for a number of reasons seconded almost unanimously the official Entente theory of responsibility. Because of a similar cultural background and a decided paucity of reliable information by which both sides of the story might be told, British propaganda found a receptive audience in the United States, and even before the American entry in 1917, the efforts of American historians were

hardly in keeping with the presidential proclamation of neutrality. With American implication in "Europe's War," a concerted drive was launched to mold dissident groups into a conforming public amenable to a successful prosecution of the war. To the historian under the intellectual mobilization fell the task of revising traditional historical views so that the Allies might appear in the most favorable light possible. To this end, the American historical profession, almost to a man, lent its services.

Scholars, caught in the mass hysteria of war, were guilty of acknowledging all sorts of absurdities which, in retrospect, appear incredible. Germany, as in the early Allied apologies, played the part of the villain. She had clandestinely plotted the war to achieve her diabolical ends without regard for her neighbors in the European family. Austria was a "cat's paw" of Pan-Germanism whose ultimate goal was the conquest of the world. The plan by which that goal was to be realized was devised by the Kaiser and his henchmen at Potsdam on July 5, 1914. This was the basic American text, although some of the more talented of the Entente mythologists added a few novel twists. When the fabrications of the wartime students of responsibility were given legal sanction at Versailles, "asininity triumphed."¹

It was the unprecedented rapidity with which the

¹Clarence W. Alvord, "Historical Science and the War Guilt," The American Mercury, XI, No. 43 (July, 1927), 324.

archives of first Russia, Austria and Germany and later France and Great Britain were opened that caused the shift in historical opinion. The opening of the European repositories and seven years of exhaustive scholarship therein constituted a third phase, an exploratory period, in the war guilt debate. It prepared the way for the fourth phase where scholars could presumably approach the problem free from external pressures. Seldom in the annals of historiography had there been so rapid and complete a reversal in historical consensus as that which followed the opening of the European archives. A world-wide phenomenon, it was particularly apparent in the United States where, during the war, there had been such conformity of opinion concerning war responsibility.

After 1920, the lines were drawn between the several "schools" of American students of the war's origins. The first included those who closed their eyes to the recent revelations, conveniently branding them Bolshevik or German propaganda. A second group included those who cited the latest evidence but used it to substantiate the 1919 version of responsibility. The third category encompassed the revisionists--those who felt the Central Powers had been wronged by the guilty verdict handed down by the victors at Versailles. To these historians, the most pressing problem facing civilization was the revision of the "Carthaginian Treaty" to which Germany's signature had been extorted at the point of a bayonet. The American

exponents of the new interpretation logically fell into two sub-divisions: the "moderates" who felt all of the belligerents were responsible for the war, and the uncompromising revisionists who maintained that the Central Powers were innocent in 1914.

In contrast to the earlier period of the war guilt controversy, the origins of the war began to be considered in the light of historical trends rather than through the personality quirks of individual statesmen. Furthermore, an understanding of the "Twelve Days," was no longer adequate if one wished to fathom the real reasons for the war. Hundreds--indeed thousands--of forces had operated on those twelve days which scholars had examined minutely to solve a problem the answer to which lay hidden in the past. As one writer so aptly put it, "In those days, it was not the living, but the all-powerful generations of the dead who acted."²

Although there was a commendable trend toward consideration of fundamental causes before assessing responsibility for the war, the criticisms directed at the early war guilt scholars are often equally applicable to later students of the subject. It has been noted above that early American scholars of the war's beginnings were motivated largely by national, racial or institutional biases rather than by a sincere desire to tell the truth. After 1917, patriotic responsibilities overshadowed in-

²Alvord, The American Mercury, XI, No. 43, 326.

tellectual responsibilities and often debased the end products of American historians. Distorted judgments were the rule among early students of war origins. Most of them were guilty of ascertaining responsibility before discerning the facts. In the case of the earlier students of the subject, reliable documentary evidence was scarce enough that an interpretation holding Germany solely guilty for causing the war might be condoned.

For many of the later American historians, however, justification for the position they assumed is more difficult to find. The post-war students in many instances were as unbalanced as had been their predecessors. No longer did mere words suffice as evidence as was illustrated by the varying interpretations assigned to identical documents. Many of the scholars publishing after 1920 were guilty of omitting whatever evidence might tend to refute their general thesis. To Barnes, Germany was innocent, and the most important event underlying the war was the Buchlau conversations. On the other hand, Schmitt, who purported to examine all of the evidence bearing on the outbreak of the war and who felt that Germany was guilty on the basis of that evidence, completely ignored the Isvolsky-Aehrenthal talks in his work. With such contradictions apparent in the works of scholarly writers, it was small wonder that the "pseudo-scientific" dispute was deemed as "useful to society as English fox hunting."³ Although both Barnes and Schmitt paid lip

³Alvord, The American Mercury, XI, No. 43, 324.

service to the distinction originally made by Thucydides in his history of the Peloponnesian Wars, neither of them "practiced what he preached." Of a total of 737 pages in his volume on war guilt, Barnes devoted exactly eighty-seven to what might be termed remote causes. Schmitt, for all practical purposes, wrote off the fundamental causes in practice. Of the three outstanding American post-war scholars, only Fay accorded to underlying causes in practice the importance all three acknowledged in theory.

Nearly all of those who wrote on war responsibility after 1920, like their wartime colleagues, adopted a point of view before beginning their investigation. With Schmitt, it was the conviction that the Versailles version of responsibility was just, and he ignored those facts that might tend to refute that allegation. To Barnes, Article 231 was an anathema, and the assertion of German innocence was the overriding characteristic of his contributions to the great debate. Barnes, however, did not attack the philosophy behind the treaty as did Fay. It was German guilt, not "sole guilt" that bothered Barnes. Having cleared Germany to his own satisfaction, he merely attached the guilty appellation to another party. As Charles A. Beard commented, he merely shifted villains. Fay, on the other hand, argued in terms of "relative responsibility," not "guilt," a term which connoted a prior inclination. He disavowed attempts by any scholar to attach the "guilt" to any one nation or man. Moreover, he maintained that

if it could be scientifically apportioned, the degree of guilt would be different for the fundamental causes from the immediate causes. To Fay, there was no war "guilt." The conflict was a manifestation of human society in action. There was no more guilt involved in causing the war than in any other aspect of a changing civilization.

Both the wartime and post-war students of the war's origins were equally guilty of using vague terms without bothering to define them. For example, there were few who suggested what was meant by militarism, navalism, Pan-Germanism, Pan-Slavism, hegemony or encirclement. Responsibility or guilt meant very little if the scholar did not reveal the context in which he used the term. If the jargon used by the students of war responsibility had been adequately defined, the suspicion that many of the "scholarly" accounts would break down is probably well-founded.

Besides the subjectivity that permeated the discussion of the events leading to the war, historians generally insisted upon passing moral judgments on the men whom they studied. If wartime scholars attributed incredible characteristics to the Kaiser and Bethmann-Hollweg, later historians were as guilty in their discussions of Sazonov, Isvolsky, Poincaré and Grey. Had both the early and later writers given human fallibility more consideration in their treatments of the war's beginnings, the end product would have been more palatable. Blundering

was a better explanation for the war in 1914 than scheming. By few historians was there a real effort to discover the ideas that prevailed in that fateful summer. Instead, scholars tried to generalize on the actions of individual statesmen through an idea attributed collectively to his predecessors. In other words, the events of 1914 were viewed by wartime and post-war scholars alike as one aspect of an infinitely larger picture. If the earlier writers on war responsibility read the expansionist theories of Treitschke and Bernhardi and applied them to explain the actions of German officials in 1914, later scholars, particularly the uncompromising revisionists, viewed the events leading up to the war as a part of a long range "plot." It was easy and apparently fruitful to take the French idea of révanche or the traditional Russian desire for control of the Straits and apply them as the motivating factors behind the actions of the two Entente powers.

If one reads a pro-German historian, he is likely to be impressed with the importance of "Gallic excitability" in assessing the responsibility for the war. On the other hand, by a pro-Entente scholar one can expect "Prussian militarism," "Junkerdom" or Pan-Germanism to be accorded a position of predominant importance. The generalizations applied to national character by most students of the war's origins, although they might be substantiated in isolated instances, very simply do not stand up to critical analysis. Traditional historical methodology

was cast out of the window by many learned scholars because the actions of individuals in pre-1914 Europe were more easily explained by vague and meaningless "national characteristics." Until 1928, there was a decided need for the reinstatement of traditional historical methodology to discover the real causes of the war. That need was satisfied in the United States by Fay, who, to all outward appearances, approached the problem of responsibility with an open mind and a sincere desire to discover the truth. His efforts performed in the United States the same service as those of Gooch in England, Renouvin in France and Albertini in Italy.

Whether the Barnes, Fay or Schmitt interpretation of the war's origins is the proper one is still debated in some quarters, although Fay's "divided responsibility" thesis has been accepted generally by professional historians. Perhaps the most fruitful and lasting result of the post-war controversy was the final and complete repudiation of the war-time theories of responsibility which rested largely upon emotional conjecture, not historical fact.

The contradictory conclusions arrived at by the later students of the subject can be attributed to a number of reasons. Because the proliferation of new evidence continued almost until the outbreak of World War II, many of the American scholars of responsibility, the majority of whom published during the 1920's, were unable to take

advantage of the later releases. Furthermore, some scholars, even as late as the 1930's, found it extremely difficult to divest themselves of partisanship and drew conclusions which were not warranted by the facts.

At any rate, it is generally agreed by the world's historians that the guilt for World War I can no longer be laid exclusively at the door of Germany or any other nation for that matter. Revisionism failed of its ultimate goal--a de jure recognition by the architects of Versailles of their "error"--but it succeeded in convincing the world's scholars that no one nation could be saddled with responsibility for the "Great War."

The triumph of National Socialism in Germany and World War II gave rise to a cry for reconsideration of the revisionist position. In some historical circles--few to be sure since most scholars had learned a lesson from World War I--a mild reaction against the revisionist theory of responsibility manifested itself. Again the Versailles version of guilt appeared to answer current problems, and scholars in various nations announced the discovery of new, incriminating evidence vindicating the 1919 verdict. That evidence has not been forthcoming. The thorough-going publication of the French documents, the completion of the British collection in 1938 and other recent revelations have done nothing to alter the view that the moderate revisionist view is the proper interpretation of the war's origins. The most recent critical analyses

of the years leading to the conflict bear out Fay's assertion that the only view worthy of the scholar is that which holds all of the major European powers accountable for World War I.⁴

⁴See Luigi Albertini, The Origins of the War. 3 vols. Translated and edited by Isabella M. Massey. London: Oxford University Press, 1952-57.

Albertini, an Italian scholar, tended toward the Schmitt view that Germany was perhaps more responsible for the European War than the other powers, but that each of the belligerents because of misunderstandings, misplaced suspicions, inadvertent blunders or reluctance to act when action was necessary bore some measure of responsibility. Unfortunately, Albertini's untimely death prevented his writing the last chapter to his three volumes which was to have been devoted to assessment of relative responsibility. His thesis, however, agrees with that of Fay that no power deliberately willed the war, but that all, in a greater or lesser degree, contributed to it.

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