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## The End of American Innocence

Henry F. May

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sunken river valleys; others are believed to be the result of underwater erosion, caused by deep ocean currents. Some of the continental slopes are among the most spectacular escarpments on earth and the floors of the deep ocean basins are far from monotonous. Recent echo sounding surveys have shown that midocean mountain systems are far more extensive than hitherto suspected, the mid-Atlantic ridge being a case in point, while isolated sea mounts of volcanic origin abound in the Pacific. Steep-sided trenches are often thousands of miles long. A number of charts and profiles demonstrate to the reader that the ocean floors exhibit at least as much contrast as the surfaces of the continents. Several chapters, mostly near the end of the book, cover the exploration of the rock structures underlying the ocean floors by direct coring and sophisticated geophysical techniques. The latter include acoustic probing, seismography and gravity surveys. The implications of the findings for the evolution of the ocean basins are discussed. A short bibliography references related books of a somewhat more technical nature. Some of the naval implications of much of the material in this fine book cannot be discussed in proper perspective in an unclassified review.

May, Henry F. *The End of American Innocence*. New York, Knopf, 1959. 412 p.

With enterprise and imagination the author of this sprightly volume searches for the origins of the cultural revolution which became manifest in America during the 1920's. His theme is that all the major elements of that revolution in thought, literature, manners and morals, often considered as growing out of the postwar reaction, actually were well at work before World War I. Concerned principally with the period 1912-1917, he divides his observations into four parts: "The Nineteenth Century Intact (1912)," "Older Insurgents and Invaders (1890-1917)," "The Innocent Rebellion (1912-1917)," and "The End of American Innocence (1914-1917)." Following in the tradition of *Goldman's Rendezvous with Destiny*, and serving

as a kind of prelude for such books as Allen's *Only Yesterday* and the Lynds' *Middletown*, the book is concerned mainly with the conflicts of ideas. Opening with the high optimism culminating in the triumph of progressivism and the election of Wilson in 1912, it ends with the tragedy of Wilson — "One of the few perfect tragedies of history, a story in which nobility of purpose combined with spiritual pride were cruelly punished by the gods." The earliest and most consistent supporters of the Allies and of American intervention in World War I, May points out, were neither the business interests nor those sensing a vital American interest in the balance of power or the preservation of the Atlantic barrier, but the defenders of nineteenth century tradition and the professional "custodians of culture." In the end they saw the complete disintegration of the old order, the set of ideas which had dominated the American mind so effectively from the mid-nineteenth century until after 1912. "The end of American innocence was a part of a great tragedy, but it was not, in itself, an unmitigated disaster. Those who look at it with dismay, or those who deny that it happened, do so because they expect true stories to have a completely happy ending. This is a kind of innocence American history must get over."

## PERIODICALS

"Missile Plane." *Time*, November 23, 1959, p. 84.

A brief article on the Dyna-Soar which the Air Force hopes to have ready by 1968 or 1969.

Sington, Derrick, "Democracy's Chances in Asia." *Western World*. November 1959, p. 49-54.

Examines the questions: What can the West do to help the democratic idea which it has planted in Asia to prevail? And are there any chances that the authoritarian regimes in South-east Asia will evolve into Western-style democracies?