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The First World War: To Arms

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impact of Germany's failure to integrate its intelligence. However, Rhys-Jones all but ignores America's involvement and fails to include much of the German materials that detail the political factors driving Admiral Raeder and explain the naval staff's objections to executing Operation RHINE in May 1941. Neither book tells the story completely; but if one must choose, *The Loss of the Bismarck* provides a better naval story, while *The Destruction of the Bismarck* provides the better strategic treatment.

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Strachan, Hew. *The First World War: To Arms*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001. 1,127pp. \$39.95

What began as a single-volume replacement of Oxford University Press's long-running World War I survey (*A History of the Great War*, by C. R. M. F. Cruttwell [1934]) has, in Hew Strachan's hands, burgeoned into three mammoth volumes, of which this is the first. The second, we are told, will cover the years 1915 and 1916 and will be called *No Quarter*. The third and final volume, entitled *Fall Out* (reader be warned that the first volume has been in the making since 1989), will pick up in the winter of 1916 and push through to the end of the war.

Since this first volume alone runs to 1,127 pages, readers will want to know how this book differs from an already crowded field. The answer is that it looks at topics—origins, war planning, tactics, munitions crises, morale—in a broad

comparative context. No blundering great power is unfairly singled out.

As is obvious from the subtitle, the book is about the origins of the war, mobilization, and opening campaigns. To rephrase what has already been written many times over by battalions of historians is no easy task, but Strachan rises to the challenge. Better yet, he works through all the latest literature in English, French, and German to provide the most up-to-date interpretation of the war's outbreak. In common with most historians, Strachan points to the shakiness of the German Empire and its nervous quest for status and security as the main causes of the war. A chief abettor was Austria-Hungary, whose own military had become so enfeebled by the continuous Vienna-Budapest budget skirmishes that war in 1914 appeared the only way to rally the monarchy behind a much-needed program of rearmament. Similar calculations prevailed in Russia, where the tsar hoped that mobilization in defense of Serbia would heal political wounds and stop a politico-economic strike wave that had escalated from 222 strikes in 1910 to 3,534 in the first half of 1914. France and Great Britain appear more benign; Strachan concludes from the most recent French scholarship that there was no real war fever in France—*révanche* was a slogan of certain pressure groups. Britain was hamstrung between its fleet and "continentalists" clustered around General Henry Wilson.

Strachan's analysis of the competing war plans is excellent. Regarding the Schlieffen Plan, he describes Moltke the Younger's growing unease with the seven-to-one ratio set by Albert von Schlieffen to overweight the "right hook" through Belgium and Holland

that would envelop a French thrust into Lorraine. Although Wilhelm Groener and B. H. Liddell Hart later blasted Moltke for his timidity—he reduced the ratio of troops on the right wing to those on the left to three to one—Strachan points out that “an army would [not] behave as a united mass, gaining impetus on its right specifically from the weakness of its left,” for an army “is a combination of individuals and not a weight obeying the laws of physics.” That is precisely the point: the Schlieffen Plan was undone not by its relative weighting but by inadequate transport and insoluble problems of supply. Each German corps required twenty-four kilometers of road space, and there was just not enough of that on the right wing once the Belgians tore up their railways and Holland was foreclosed as a corridor. Add to this the fact that no fewer than 60 percent of German trucks had broken down by late August 1914, and it is easier to explain the German floundering at the Marne. There was also the small problem of French resistance. Having begun the war with tactics that were notoriously “perplexed by the problems of firepower,” the German army faced French forces, commanded by Field Marshal J. J. C. Joffre, that hacked five entire German corps to pieces in the last week of August and the first week of September 1914. Strachan’s larger analysis of this Battle of the Marne is interesting. The German high command’s initial response to the defeat—Moltke and thirty-two other generals were dismissed—was to blame individuals, “to make the debate about operational ideas, not about grand strategy.” In fact, the Marne was a strategic failing that *should* have discredited the kaiser and his army, which “had failed to succeed in its prime role.” Yet there was no

healthy introspection or self-assessment; the imperial army would simply hammer away for another four years.

In contrast to the western front, hammering seemed to work in the East, where the Germans shattered the Russians at Tannenberg and the Austro-Hungarians achieved some early successes in Galicia. However, there too the war stagnated for logistical reasons; with Germany committed on the western front and Russia’s strength divided by French demands for an attack on East Prussia, it was difficult to mass troops and artillery *anywhere* on the eastern front, and yet more difficult to move them, given the poverty of communications.

Although the production of this three-volume history of World War I will take far longer than the Great War itself took to fight, readers willing to enter the trenches with this first volume will be rewarded with a kaleidoscopic and elegantly written presentation of the great issues and problems raised by the war’s origins, campaigns, and home fronts.

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Uhrowczik, Peter. *The Burning of Monterey: The 1818 Attack on California by the Privateer Bouchard*. Los Gatos, Calif.: Cyril Books, 2001. 170pp. \$12.95

I am a resident of Monterey. Everyone here knows about the Carmel Mission and Father Junipero Serra. Colton Hall, where the California Constitutional Convention was held, still stands, as a preserved historic landmark. Cannery Row likewise remains, though John