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The White Revolutionary 1851-1898

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despite all manner of interference from the home government and allies.

The only competitor volume is that of Harvey DeWeerd, *President Wilson Fights His War*, also published in 1968 as part of the Macmillan series on the wars of the United States. DeWeerd attempted to break with the traditional approach to his subject, recognizing the obvious reality that the struggle was essentially European in nature: "Europe was fully engaged for four years . . . any attempt to describe the American contribution in a vacuum, or to present the European phases of the war as mere background to the American effort is bound to produce distortion."

Unfortunately this promising approach did not lead to a distinctive, authoritative outcome. Despite his intent, DeWeerd produced a book that in essentials is similar to those of the A.E.F.—tradition centered. He provides extensive background, devoting most of the first two hundred pages to the development of the war during 1914-1917, before the A.E.F. became a factor. Moreover, he recognizes that American operations in 1918 were an aspect of inter-Allied campaigns—the desperate Anglo-French-Belgian defense against the great German offensives of March-July and Foch's decisive counteroffensives of July-November.

Until someone offers a new analysis based on a perspective different from that of the traditional A.E.F. studies and does the task well, *The War to End All Wars* will remain

the standard general history of the American role in the great conflict of 1914-1918.

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Gall, Lothar. *Bismarck: The White Revolutionary 1851-1898*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1986. 676pp., 2 vols. \$69.90

Published in German in 1984, this important work constitutes the first in-depth reevaluation of Otto von Bismarck by a major West German historian since 1945. Gall, professor of modern history at Frankfurt University, has taken as his theme, Bismarck the "white" or conservative revolutionary. The two volumes, divided at the year 1871, abound with attestations to the Iron Chancellor's ability to conduct the politics of the feasible. The statesman who emerges from these pages based his actions upon cold, rational calculations of power politics, knew the limitations of any given situation, and placed *realpolitik* above *idealpolitik*.

Gall has two major points to make. First, he rejects both the positive hero worship of Bismarck by the Prussian school—largely based upon Bismarck's memoirs wherein the chancellor wrote history not "as it happened" but rather as he wished it to have happened—and the denigration of Bismarck's accomplishments by today's scholars. Along the way, Gall rejects the thesis that Bismarck was the master manipulator. Rather

than unraveling a carefully thought out, predetermined plan to realize Prusso-German hegemony in Europe, Bismarck conducted several short campaigns against isolated adversaries on the basis of the given power-political constellations. In doing so, he was guided less by ideas than by vital interests.

Secondly, Gall decries the ongoing fixation of West German historians with the alleged primacy either of domestic or foreign affairs. Both interact constantly; neither is independent of the other. Thus he depicts Bismarck's colonial policy of 1884-86 as a function of both foreign and domestic policy. Moreover, Gall rejects current buzzwords such as "Bonapartism" and "Caesarism" to depict Bismarck, as neither reflects the political system under which Bismarck worked. The chancellor's relationship with the military is a case in point. Gall argues that the permanent elevation of the military above the political branch of government, its constitutional foundation as a weapon of royal prerogative, and its five or seven-year removal from Parliament's budgetary control reflect more the realities of the Prusso-German state that Bismarck inherited than his own specific views on the subject.

Bismarck's greatest accomplishment—especially in light of subsequent German history—was his ability to understand the nature of the European chessboard upon which every piece interacted with every other. Taking the Anglo-Russian antagonism as the norm in European affairs,

Bismarck sought to pursue a "free hand" in diplomacy within the limits imposed by this constant. His voluntary renunciation of future wars of aggression and acceptance of semi-hegemony in Europe in the "Bad Kissingen Decree" of 1877, perhaps, is the best evidence of the chancellor's intellectual growth from his earlier days as crisis minister and political juggler.

On the negative side of the ledger, Gall points out that Bismarck left a bitter legacy, or mortgage, both to his own and to future generations. The chancellor's penchant for denouncing his political foes as enemies of the state, his simplistic friend-foe mentality, his inability to appreciate political compromise, and his "irresponsible" policy of forceful "Germanization" of Prussian-Polish lands foreshadowed many of the future policies of German leaders, especially during the two World Wars of the 20th century.

This superb study, above all, partially liberates West German scholarship from the narrow confines imposed upon it by those who believe in the primacy of impersonal structures and systems and restores the credibility of "historical biography" as a legitimate method of explaining historical phenomena. It further reaffirms A.J.P. Taylor's assertion that Bismarck is the one European statesman worthy to be recalled from the grave for a discussion of his policies.

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