



Europe's Last Summer: Who Started the Great War in 1914?

By David Fromkin

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In **Europe's Last Summer**, David Fromkin provides a different answer: hostilities were commenced deliberately. In a riveting re-creation of the run-up to war, Fromkin shows how German generals, seeing war as inevitable, manipulated events to precipitate a conflict waged on their own terms. Moving deftly between diplomats, generals, and rulers across Europe, he makes the complex diplomatic negotiations accessible and immediate. Examining the actions of individuals amid larger historical forces, this is a gripping historical narrative and a dramatic reassessment of a key moment in the twentieth-century.

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Europe's Last Summer: Who Started the Great War in 1914? By David Fromkin Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #180147 in Books
- Brand: Fromkin, David
- Published on: 2005-03-08
- Released on: 2005-03-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.99" h x .76" w x 5.16" l, .80 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 349 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The world of nihilistic terrorist conspiracy, paranoid empires and diplomatic opportunism that Fromkin (*In the Time of the Americans*) describes in this terrific account of WWI's underpinnings will seem eerily familiar to 21st-century denizens. Fromkin allies a direct, compulsively readable style with a daunting command of sources old and new, unrolling a complex skein of events with assurance and wit and dispatching numerous conventional wisdoms. The view (most influentially stated in Barbara Tuchman's Vietnam-era *Guns of August*), that the war, unwanted by all, was the result of an unfortunate series of accidents, is neutralized by the clearly presented evidence of careful premeditation and planning on the part of Germany and Austro-Hungary, as is the more recent assertion of Niall Ferguson's *The Pity of War* that if only the rest of Europe had acceded to Germany's imperial ambitions, the whole business might have been avoided. The enormity of the horrors unleashed in that fateful summer—and the culpability of all sides in exacerbating them—has made laying blame for the war squarely at the foot of the German and Austrian leadership unfashionable, but the evidence assembled by Fromkin is strong. His pictures of a Germany feeling itself (without real cause) surrounded, convinced of an imminent national demise from which only war could save it and of the Kafkaesque Austro-Hungarian empire lurching toward Armageddon are pitiless and sharp. Readers who ate up Margaret MacMillan's account of the war's aftermath, in Paris 1919, shouldn't miss this equally accomplished chronicle of its beginning.

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Fromkin's answer to the question posed in his subtitle is succinct: Helmuth von Moltke, imperial Germany's army chief in 1914. In his clearly delineated argument, Fromkin addresses alternative theories about the cause of World War I, but he returns to the decision chain of a small number of officials in Berlin and Vienna. Their destruction of key evidence hampers the precise reconstruction of their actions as does, Fromkin maintains, historians' confusion about what the Germans were licensing in agreeing to whatever chastisement Vienna decided to deliver upon Serbia, on the pretext of avenging the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. In contrast to theorists of rigid alliances, to whom the notorious "blank check" initiated events almost beyond human control, Fromkin arraigns the actions of Moltke and his colleagues, especially in late July 1914, when the procrastinating Austrians had yet to crush Serbia in war, as Moltke expected. Hijacking the bollixed-up situation, he overrode Kaiser Wilhelm II's resistance, Fromkin concludes, to a deliberate instigation of a second war against Russia and France. The boldness of Fromkin's argument is enough to warrant attention, but his fluidity of expression guarantees a large audience for this book. *Gilbert Taylor*

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Review

"An absorbing history of WWI's origins. . . . Superb." —*Newsweek*

"An enormously impressive book, a popular history brimming with fresh scholarship." —*The Weekly Standard*

"No one has deconstructed the war quite the way Fromkin has.... Through it all are the telling details of diplomatic and military life that make the period so utterly tragic." —*The Boston Globe*

“A crisp, lively, day-by-day account of that fateful summer . . . This book, both decisive and nuanced, is as convincing as it is appalling.” –*Foreign Affairs*

“Excellent . . . **Europe’s Last Summer** never bogs down, covers the ground, and makes its points. It is also charmingly written.” –*The New Criterion*

“Magnificent, consistently compelling. . . . Written with clarity and insight. . . . [Fromkin] masterfully guides us through the complexities of appropriate prewar and European diplomatic and military history.”
–*BookPage*

“The boldness of Fromkin’s argument is enough to warrant attention, but his fluidity of expression guarantees a large audience.” –*Booklist* (starred)

“Fromkin’s thoroughgoing account gives answers that only new research and previously too-often hidden records could provide. . . . Comes to new conclusions.” –*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

“A fast-paced, gripping guide through the complex set of reasons and emotions that led to the 20th century’s seminal conflict.” –*CNN.com*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Leo Osborne:

Reading can called thoughts hangout, why? Because if you are reading a book mainly book entitled Europe's Last Summer: Who Started the Great War in 1914? your brain will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in most aspect that maybe mysterious for but surely can become your mind friends. Imaging each word written in a guide then become one web form conclusion and explanation this maybe you never get before. The Europe's Last Summer: Who Started the Great War in 1914? giving you an additional experience more than blown away your head but also giving you useful data for your better life within this era. So now let us show you the relaxing pattern at this point is your body and mind are going to be pleased when you are finished looking at it, like winning an activity. Do you want to try this extraordinary spending spare time activity?

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