



Burden of Guilt: How Germany Shattered the Last Days of Peace, Summer 1914

Daniel Allen Butler

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The conflagration that consumed Europe in August 1914 had been a long time in coming—and yet it need never have happened at all. For though all the European powers were prepared to accept a war as a resolution to the tensions which were fermenting across the Continent, only one nation wanted war to come: Imperial Germany. Of all the countries caught up in the tangle of alliances, promises, and pledges of support during the crisis that followed the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Germany alone possessed the opportunity and the power to determine that a war in eastern Europe would become The Great War, which swept across the Continent and nearly destroyed a thousand years of European civilization.

For nearly nine decades it has been argued that the responsibility for the First World War was a shared one, spread among all the Great Powers. Now, in *The Burden of Guilt*, historian Daniel Allen Butler has substantively challenged that point of view, establishing that the Treaty of Versailles was actually a correct and fair judgment: Germany did indeed bear the true responsibility for the Great War.

Working from government archives and records, as well as personal papers and memoirs of the men who made the decisions that carried Europe to war, Butler interweaves the events of summer 1914 with portraits of the monarchs, diplomats, prime ministers, and other national leaders involved in the 1914 crisis. He explores the national policies and goals these men were pursuing, and shows conclusively how on three distinct occasions the Imperial German government was presented with opportunities to contain the spreading crisis—opportunities unlike those of any other nation involved—yet each time, the German government consciously and deliberately chose the path which virtually assured that the Continent would go up in flames.

The Burden of Guilt is a work destined to become an essential part of the library of the First World War, vital to understanding not only the “how” but also the “why” behind the pivotal event of modern world history.

REVIEWS

“Author Daniel Allen Butler has taken the long accepted premise that World War I was the combined fault of all the European world powers at the time and argues that it was Germany alone that was responsible for beginning and prolonging the bloody conflict.”

Military Heritage, 12/2010

“presents a controversial analysis of the diplomatic and political events leading up to the start of World War I...rests the blame for the conflict squarely at the feet of Germany arguing that deliberate actions or inactions by German leaders at key moments in the crisis forced the world inexorably to war.”

Book News, 10/20/2010

“...essential reading for anyone wishing to understand not only the “how” but the “why” behind one of the

most pivotal events of world history.”

Lone Star Book Review, 10/2010

Windscreen Winter 2011

“...lively and informative analysis of the events leading up to The Great War and political leaders who were involved.”

The Maple Leaf, Western Front Association

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Adam Rucks:

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