

Cambridge University Press

0521026377 - Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914-1918

Edited by Roger Chickering and Stig Förster

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Great War, Total War

COMBAT AND MOBILIZATION ON THE WESTERN FRONT, 1914–1918

World War I was the first large-scale industrialized military conflict in world history, and it gave birth to the concept of total war. The essays in this volume analyze the experience of the war in light of this concept's implications, in particular the systematic erosion of distinctions between the military and civilian spheres. With an emphasis on developments in Germany, France, Great Britain, and the United States, leading scholars from Europe and North America locate World War I along a trajectory that began in the wars of the middle of the nineteenth century and culminated in worldwide conflict in the middle of the twentieth. The essays explore the efforts of soldiers and statesmen, industrialists and financiers, professionals and civilian activists to adjust to the titanic, pervasive pressures that the military stalemate on the western front imposed on belligerent and neutral societies.

Roger Chickering is a professor of history in the Center for German and European Studies at Georgetown University.

Stig Förster is a professor of history at the University of Bern, Switzerland.

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521773522

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First published 2000
 This digitally printed first paperback version 2006

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Great War, total war : combat and mobilization on the Western Front, 1914-1918 / edited
 by Roger Chickering and Stig Förster.

p. cm. – (Publications of the German Historical Institute)

Includes index.

ISBN 0-521-77352-0 (hardbound)

1. World War, 1914-1918 – Campaigns – Western Front. I. Series. II. Chickering,
 Roger, 1942- III. Förster, Stig.

D530.G68 1999
 940.4'14421-dc21

99-043669

ISBN-13 978-0-521-77352-2 hardback
 ISBN-10 0-521-77352-0 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-02637-6 paperback
 ISBN-10 0-521-02637-7 paperback

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Preface

How total was the Great War? This question occupied the participants at an international conference that convened in Münchenwiler, Switzerland, in early October 1996. Scholars from eight countries and three continents attempted to answer this vexing question. The outcome of the conference might better be described as exhaustion rather than resolution of the issue. The deliberations did produce interesting and useful results that inform the present collection of essays.

The Münchenwiler conference was part of a broader series of conferences on the problem of total war. The series has aimed at tracing the history of total warfare in five phases, from the first rehearsals until Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The series began in 1992, at the German Historical Institute (GHI) in Washington, D.C., with a conference that compared the American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification. A second conference met in Augsburg, Germany, in 1994: It considered whether concepts of total warfare were current in the United States and Imperial Germany, then the two most advanced industrial nations in the world, prior to 1914. This book addresses a third phase. Two final conferences are planned on the interwar period and on World War II.

This book would not have been possible without the gracious support of a number of institutions and individuals. The editors wish to thank the GHI for carrying the main burden of the conference and the series of which it is part; its former director, Hartmut Lehmann, helped to initiate the series. His successor, Detlef Junker, has made possible its continuation. In addition, this third conference enjoyed the support of the German Historical Institutes in London and Paris, whose respective directors, Peter Wende and Werner Paravicini, we also wish to thank. In Switzerland, this project benefited from the financial assistance of the Max and Elsa Beer-Brawand Foundation and the Swiss National Science Foundation, whose academic manager for the arts, Rudolf Bolzern, lent us friendly and valued support. We also wish to thank the managers and staff of the conference center at Schloss Münchenwiler for their hospitality.

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Furthermore, we are grateful to the History Department at the University of Bern, whose staff helped organize the conference. In particular, we thank Birgit Beck, Giulia Brogini, Johannes Gerber, Andreas Lüthi, Dierk Walter, and Regina Zürcher. At the GHI Washington, Annette M. Marciel copyedited the manuscript. Finally, Daniel S. Mattern of the GHI Washington supervised the book's editorial gestation with his characteristic skill.

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