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978-1-107-03768-7 - Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914–1918: Third Edition

Roger Chickering

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Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914–1918

This book explores the impact of the First World War on Imperial Germany and examines military aspects of the conflict, as well as the diplomacy, politics, and industrial mobilization of wartime Germany. Including maps, tables, and illustrations, it also offers a rich portrait of life on the home front – the war’s pervasive effects on rich and poor, men and women, young and old, farmers and city-dwellers, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. It analyzes the growing burdens of war and the translation of hardship into political opposition. The new edition incorporates the latest scholarship and expands the coverage to include military action outside Europe, military occupation, prisoners of war, and the memory of war. This survey represents the most comprehensive history of Germany during the First World War. It will be of interest to all students of German and European history, as well as the history of war and society.

ROGER CHICKERING is Professor Emeritus of History in the BMW Center for German and European Studies at Georgetown University, where he taught from 1993 to 2010. His recent publications include *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914–1918* (2007) and, with Dennis Showalter and Hans van de Ven, *The Cambridge History of War: War in the Modern World* (2012).

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For Kyle

When I view the radiant valleys of our fatherland which spread out here at our feet, I can only wish: may the day never come when the hordes of war rage through them. And may the day also never come when we are forced to carry war to the valleys of a foreign people.

Gustav Wyneken
October 1913

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Preface to the First Edition

This book originated in another project, which is at once broader in scope and much narrower in focus. In deference to the principle that total war requires total history, I have been studying the comprehensive impact of the First World War in a single mid-sized German city. In conjunction with this project, I decided several years ago to explore the history of the war and German society with a class of undergraduate students at the University of Oregon. I discovered that there was no suitable text for such a course. The present volume grew directly out of discussions with students in that class. It is conceived in the first instance for readers like them, but it is also intended for others who are interested in the modern history of Germany and Europe, as well as the history of war and society. The scholarly apparatus is designed for those whom the text entices into further reading.

It is now a pleasure to repay my many intellectual debts with public gratitude. My thanks go first to my students in Oregon, my former home, for contributions that pervade the volume. In addition, I owe great thanks to a number of scholars who have offered comments on the manuscript as it progressed. They include Gerald Feldman, Wilhelm Deist, Belinda Davis, Stig Förster, and Richard Stites, who is now my colleague at Georgetown. My friend Bruce Wonder, who counts himself in the category of “informed general reader,” has also offered invaluable suggestions for the manuscript’s improvement. My research assistant, David Freudenwald, provided much-needed help in my dealings with a number of libraries. Several institutions have also supported the manuscript in various stages of its gestation. My gratitude goes to the Gerda Henkel Foundation, which supported a year’s research in Europe in 1991–2, the Graduate School at Georgetown University, which made possible several subsequent trips to Europe, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC, which provided me with the opportunity to complete the work in a stimulating atmosphere of intellectual exchange.

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Preface to the Third Edition

When I began to work on the First World War in the late 1980s, I had no idea that I would still be writing about it on the occasion of its centenary. A lot has happened in the meantime. This volume has now gone through two English-language editions, as well as a German translation. The “other project” that provided the stimulus for the first edition was published several years ago as a kind of pendant in microcosm to this volume.¹

Beyond commemorating the outbreak of the war a century ago, this new edition of the volume is designed to account for the scholarship that has enriched the literature during the decade since the publication of the second edition. I have attempted to integrate this new work into the account, recognizing that the explosion of titles in 2014 will defeat any hope of staying abreast of the scholarship for long. The new or expanded portions of this edition mark the principal areas into which scholarly interest in Germany’s war has migrated in recent years. These parts include the discussions of military operations outside Europe, events in eastern Europe, occupation regimes, prisoners of war, the circumstances of the war’s end, and collective memory of the war.

Thanking all those to whom I have become intellectually indebted would occupy more space than I can claim. I would, however, like to offer special thanks to the Institute for Civic Space and Public Policy at the Lazarsky University in Warsaw, which in the spring of 2011 hosted a seminar in which I had an opportunity to discuss my interests in the First World War with a number of Polish scholars. I thank Daria Nałęcz in particular. I benefited as well from participating in the seminar “Not so quiet on the eastern front: new directions in World War I studies,” which convened in October 2013 at a meeting of the German Studies Association in Denver. Margaret Anderson’s name also belongs on the list of those who have come to my aid. Finally, I must note with sadness the deaths of Wilhelm Deist, Gerry Feldman, and Richard Stites, close friends who provided essential help in the early stages of my work on the war.

¹ Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg 1914–1918* (Cambridge, 2007).

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Abbreviations

SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany
KRA	War Raw Materials Section
OHL	Supreme Command of the Army
USPD	Independent Social Democratic Party
MSPD	Majority Social Democratic Party