



War by Timetable: How the First World War Began

A J P Taylor

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'The First World War had begun - imposed on the statesmen of Europe by railway timetables. It was an unexpected climax to the railway age.'

A. J. P. Taylor was one of the most acclaimed historians of the twentieth century.

His most provocative legacy was his insistence on the roles of accident and inadvertence in the outbreak of both world wars.

First published in 1969, his book 'War by Timetable' still resonates and informs debates.

'War By Timetable' is a history of the mobilisation of the armies of the Great Powers in 1914. Taylor not only argues that the circumstances were already set for a general war, he also examines the flaws in the war plans of the Great Powers.

All the plans depended on railways, which had been timed to the minute, months or even years in advance. As the train platforms grew longer (to accommodate prospective armies) the odds upon a great conflict grew shorter.

The timetables and limited resources that were meant to serve as a deterrent to war instead relentlessly drove the powers into a conflict that engulfed the world.

'War By Timetable' is one of the finest history books ever written, a must read for anyone interested in the origins of the First World War.

Taylor's work has been widely praised:

" A.J. P Taylor's 'war by timetable thesis' caused great controversy when it first appeared over 40 years ago. It remains hugely controversial, today, and is essential reading for anyone interested in the debate on the origins on the First World War" - Professor Gary Sheffield, author 'Forgotten Victories'.

'A miracle of proportion, language and insight' - Robert Skidelsky

'A dazzling exercise in revisionism which summed up Taylor's paradoxical, provocative and inventive approach to history' - The Times

'Taylor was a lifelong dissenter ... he shifted the ground of major debates' - Ben Pimlott, The Financial Times

'No historian of the past century has been more accessible.' - Niall Ferguson, The Sunday Telegraph

'An almost faultless masterpiece' - The Observer

'Highly original and penetrating ... No one who has digested this enthralling work will ever be able to look at the period again in quite the same way'

- The Sunday Telegraph

A.J.P. Taylor (1906-90) was one of the most controversial historians of the twentieth century. He served as a lecturer at the Universities of Manchester, Oxford, and London. Taylor was significant both for the controversy his work on Germany and the Second World War engendered and for his role in the development of history on television.

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