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When Men Lost Faith in Reason: Reflections on War and Society in the Twentieth Century (Studies in Military History and International Affairs)

H. P. Willmott

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This examination of the history of the 20th century and the place of war in its unfolding presents a radical, unorthodox interpretation of both. With provision for seeing 1945 as the proper starting point for the 20th century and 1968 as the year that marked the end of the Age of Reason, this provocative study portrays the First World War as the first war of the 20th century and the Second World War as the last war of the 19th. It also provides a counterview of the Second World War as merely one part of a series of conflicts that lasted between 1931 and 1975 and the Cold War as the time when real hatreds were suspended. Moving through various insurgency campaigns, Willmott subjects the Gulf campaign of 1991 to skeptical analysis that is certain to be contentious.

Challenging the view that the 20th century will be viewed by future historians as ranging from approximately 1914 to 1992, Willmott offers this volume as a counter to modern historiography which, he contends, is obsessed with micro-analysis and has lost vital context and perspective. Arguing that war is not the preserve of the intellect, and that it is neither intrinsically rational nor scientific, Willmott depicts war as a manmade phenomenon, complete with all the elements of human failure, misjudgment, and incompetence. He concludes with a consideration of modern doctrine and predictions for the future of war.

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