



# 1914: The Year the World Ended

*Paul Ham*

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**Few years can justly be said to have transformed the earth, yet 1914 did. The story of the outbreak of World War I.**

In July of 1914, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Britain, and France were poised to plunge the world into a war that would kill or wound 37 million people, tear down the fabric of society, uproot ancient political systems, and set the course for the bloodiest century in human history. In the long run, the events of 1914 set the world on the path toward the Russian Revolution, the Treaty of Versailles, the rise of Nazism, and the Cold War. Here, award-winning historian Paul Ham tells the story of the outbreak of WWI from German, British, French, Austria-Hungarian, Russian, and Serbian perspectives. Along the way, he debunks several stubborn myths. European leaders, for example, did not stumble or "sleepwalk" into war. They fully understood that a small conflict in the Balkans—the tinderbox at the heart of the continent—could spark a European war. Yet they carried on. This book seeks to answer the most vexing question of the 20th century: *Why did European governments decide to condemn the best part of a generation of young men to the trenches and four years of slaughter, during which 8.5 million would die?*

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