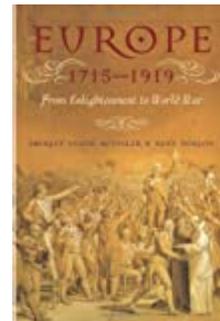




Shirley Elson Roessler, Reny Miklos. *Europe 1715-1919: From Enlightenment to World War.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003. xvi + 320 pp. \$70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7425-2766-9.



Reviewed by Kimberly Luke (Department of History, Florida State University)

Published on H-Diplo (June, 2005)

The Formation of Modern Europe

In *Europe 1715-1919: From Enlightenment to World War*, Shirley Elson Roessler and Reny Miklos present the transformation in European society that began with the Enlightenment in order to trace the emergence of modern Europe. In a textbook format, they describe the political, economic, and social history of Europe in an engaging and easily understood manner. Their work does, however, include minor errors of accuracy and style that should be considered before adopting this text for classroom use.

Believing that the ideas of the philosophes provided the intellectual foundation for modern Europe, Roessler and Miklos begin with a thorough exposition of these ideas. Their presentation of the philosophe's beliefs is engaging and is supplemented by excerpts from such works as Baron Charles de Secondat de Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws*. They carefully analyze the extent to which the philosophes's ideas affected their societies, discussing the transmission of these ideas through salons, academies, Masonic lodges, and coffeehouses. They also trace the growth of literacy that further spread new ideas. Roessler and Miklos carefully avoid the error of placing

too much emphasis on the ideas of the philosophes alone. They also explain economic and political changes that contributed to the formation of modern Europe.

Roessler and Miklos assess the impact on Europe of new political, social, and military organizations that came with the outbreak of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. They define the new ideas such as liberalism and nationalism in the aftermath of the 1815 settlement, and explain how these ideas competed with the conservative reaction that set in after Napoleon's defeat. They trace the emergence of the Industrial Revolution that began in Great Britain and spread unevenly throughout the continent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They balance their discussion between the social and political impacts of industrialization and supplement their text with a firsthand account of industrial working conditions in Great Britain.

Roessler and Miklos carefully detail the causes of increasing tensions in the last quarter of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. They analyze such factors as the new imperialism, arms races, nationalism, alliance systems, and economic rivalry in portray-

ing the varied causes of World War I. They then carefully follow the outbreak of the war, its prosecution, and its outcome.

The style of Roessler and Miklos's writing is perfectly suited for the beginning student. Their writing is engaging and detailed without being too dense for the novice. With a textbook orientation, their work contains few footnotes, but it does not ignore historiographical issues. The authors summarize differences in historical opinion to give students an appreciation of the variety of historical interpretation. They also supplement their work with a detailed appendix of primary sources that eliminates the need for an additional primary reader. They provide an easily searchable index and a thorough bibliography for additional study.

The quality of their analysis is thorough and generally accurate. Their work does contain a few problems of accuracy and style that should be considered in a revision. The most important of these involves an incorrect date for the Austrian declaration of war against Serbia at the beginning of World War I. The text lists this date as June 28 rather than July 28, an error that could cause students a great deal of confusion because they would not be able to discern the delay in the outbreak of World War I after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria (p. 218). The authors also mistakenly take the meaning of the names of the Bolshevik and Menshevik parties at face value and attribute greater support

to the Bolsheviks before 1903 (p. 199). Though the Bolsheviks did have a "majority" in a single vote, they did not represent the majority of socialists in Russia at this time. Roessler and Miklos's writing also contains a few minor passages that would be confusing for a novice. For instance, they list Peter III as Peter the Great's successor without mentioning the intervening Russian rulers (p. 54). Finally, they appear to confuse their references to the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance in the following passage: "The French regarded the Triple Alliance as standing between them and the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine, and the Germans saw it as an obstacle to their growth and destiny, or their 'place in the sun'" (p. 209). Though the French would view the Triple Alliance warily, the Germans would see it as a measure to ensure their security and would be concerned instead with the formation of the Triple Entente. Despite these minor problems, the majority of Roessler and Miklos's work is well written and historically correct.

Roessler and Miklos's *Europe 1715-1919: From Enlightenment to World War* is a wonderful introductory study that carefully describes the forces that contributed to the formation of modern Europe. The supplementary materials that the authors provide in the text such as a detailed appendix, maps, and illustrations make their work a fine textbook for beginning students. Though they should consider revisions in a few areas, their work overall is accurate and superbly presented.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-diplo>

Citation: Kimberly Luke. Review of Roessler, Shirley Elson; Miklos, Reny, *Europe 1715-1919: From Enlightenment to World War*. H-Diplo, H-Net Reviews. June, 2005.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=10615>

Copyright © 2005 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.org.