



The Beauty and the Sorrow: An Intimate History of the First World War

By Peter Englund, Peter Graves

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An intimate narrative history of World War I told through the stories of twenty men and women from around the globe--a powerful, illuminating, heart-rending picture of what the war was really like.

In this masterful book, renowned historian Peter Englund describes this epoch-defining event by weaving together accounts of the average man or woman who experienced it. Drawing on the diaries, journals, and letters of twenty individuals from Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, Venezuela, and the United States, Englund's collection of these varied perspectives describes not a course of events but "a world of feeling." Composed in short chapters that move between the home front and the front lines, *The Beauty and Sorrow* brings to life these twenty particular people and lets them speak for all who were shaped in some way by the War, but whose voices have remained unheard.

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for *The Beauty and the Sorrow*:

"In four decades of studying war, I've never read such a remarkable book."

—Gerard J. DeGroot, *The Washington Post*

"They call them the lost generation, but you'll find their story here."

—*New York Post*

"Intense and bighearted. . . . The accounts of [these] lives can be terrifying or stirring, but are most fully alive in Englund's accumulation of small moments, stray details."

—*The New York Times*

"History in the raw, an unconventional look at the war that did so much to shape the last century. . . . Englund has uncovered the stories of a myriad of fascinating characters."

—*The Boston Globe*

"An unforgettable and unprecedented view of the war as seen by 20 people who took part in it but, were it not for Englund's remarkable job of unearthing and arranging their journals, letters, and memoirs, would probably have remained forever faceless, forgotten by time. . . . Lets us in on astonishing details of the war one would be hard-pressed to find elsewhere. . . . Shatters the mold . . . A beautiful tribute."

—*San Francisco Chronicle*

"Conveys the war's complexity better than any of the grand histories so far written."

—*The Washington Post*

"Whether considered as history or as literature—it is, of course, both—*The Beauty and the Sorrow* is radically original in form and epic in scope."

—Geoff Dyer

"A brilliant feat of retrospective journalism. . . . Englund's deft collation provides insights into more than the carnage. . . . This book fleshes out the grim statistics of the Great War. . . . The eloquence of everyday participants will link the reader to the era when the origins of the ensuing century's conflicts became apparent."

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred)

"An exquisite book. . . . There are adventures and battles, of course, but also many moments of quiet contemplation with closely observed details of street scenes, restaurants, railway stations, and deserted battlefields. . . . By turns pithy, lyrical, colorful, poignant, and endlessly absorbing."

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred)

"A wonderfully wide and rich mosaic of personal experience from the First World War."

—Antony Beevor, author of *Stalingrad* and *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy*

“Englund covers a lot of ground in *The Beauty and the Sorrow*, geographically, topically, and in point of view. . . . He succeeds in his goal to humanize the war.”

—*Dallas Morning News*

“Peter Englund is one of the finest writers of our time on the tactics, the killing and the psychology of war. In *The Beauty and the Sorrow* he superbly and humanely brings to life all the tragedy, chaos, death and gunsmoke of battle.”

—Simon Sebag Montefiore, author of *Stalin* and *Young Stalin*

“Powerful and compelling . . . Of the many books about the First World War this is among the most strikingly original. . . . Almost every page of Englund’s book is fresh and revelatory.”

—*Daily Express* (UK)

“A literary as well as a historical achievement.”

—*The Guardian* (UK)

“These lives are anything but ordinary, and the stories are absolutely riveting. . . . A fresh, varied, thoroughly convincing picture of the war. . . . There are some wonderful details. . . . Englund has chosen his voices with great care, and the resulting picture of the war in the round, with all its sorrows but also its joys, is made all the more vivid by the eloquent translation from the Swedish by Peter Graves.”

—*The Telegraph* (UK)

“Englund frees individual experience from the collective cloak of history and geography [in] this extraordinary book. . . . The details build like a symphony.”

—*Mail on Sunday* (UK)

“[There are] hundreds of eerie, moving, upsetting, and surprising incidents from the First World War within this extraordinary book. . . . Like a great novel, *The Beauty and the Sorrow* manages to be both more universal and more particular [than other books on WWI]. Peter Englund frees individual experience from the collective cloak of history and geography. . . . The details build like a symphony. . . . Englund writes with a calm clarity, beautifully conveyed by his translator.”

—*Mail on Sunday* (5 stars, UK)

“Anthologies of war reminiscences are often lazy stuff, mere compilations of extracted passages from diaries and letters. . . . [But] Englund’s choice of witnesses and his use of their material are admirably judged. This is an anthology well above the common run. . . . This is a book about men and women living at the outer edge of human experience.”

—*Sunday Times* (UK)

About the Author

Peter Englund received a Ph.D. in history at the University of Uppsala in Sweden. He has been given a number of literary prizes in his home country, including the most famous one, the August. In 2002, he was elected to the Swedish Academy (who awards the Nobel Prize in Literature), and in 2008 was appointed its new Permanent Secretary. He has also worked as a war correspondent, in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq.

CHAPTER 1

1914

Go to war not for the sake of goods and gold, not for your homeland or for honour, nor to seek the death of your enemies, but to strengthen your character, to strengthen it in power and will, in habits, custom and earnestness. That is why I want to go to war.

KRESTEN ANDRESEN

Chronology 1914

28 June Murder of the Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo.

23 July Austria-Hungary delivers an ultimatum to Serbia.

28 July Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.

29 July Russia mobilises against Austria-Hungary in support of Serbia.

31 July Germany demands that Russia cease mobilisation but Russia continues.

1 August Germany mobilises, as does Russia's ally, France.

2 August German troops enter France and Luxembourg; Russians enter East Prussia.

3 August Germany demands passage for German troops through Belgium. The demand is refused.

4 August Germany invades Belgium. Great Britain declares war on Germany.

6 August French troops enter the German colony of Togoland.

7 August Russia invades German East Prussia.

13 August Austria-Hungary invades Serbia. The campaign is ultimately unsuccessful.

14 August French troops enter German Lothringen (Lorraine) but are pushed back.

18 August Russia invades the Austro-Hungarian province of Galicia.

20 August Brussels falls. German armies sweep south towards Paris.

24 August The Allied invasion of the German colony of the Cameroons begins.

26 August The Battle of Tannenberg begins. The Russian invasion of East Prussia is pushed back.

1 September The Battle of Lemberg begins. It turns into a major defeat for Austria-Hungary.

6 September Start of the Franco-British counter-offensive on the Marne. The German march on Paris is checked.

7 September The second Austro-Hungarian invasion of Serbia begins.

11 September Start of the so-called Race to the Sea in the west.

23 September Japan declares war on Germany.

12 October The first of a series of battles in Flanders begins.

29 October The Ottoman Empire enters the war on the German side.

3 November Russia invades the Ottoman province of Armenia.

7 November The German colony of Tsingtao in China is conquered by Japanese and British troops.

8 November The third Austro-Hungarian invasion of Serbia begins.

18 November The start of an Ottoman offensive in the Caucasus.

21 November British troops occupy Basra in Mesopotamia.

7 December The second battle for Warsaw begins.

Sunday, 2 August 1914

Laura de Turczynowicz is woken early one morning in Augustów

What is the worst thing she can imagine? That her husband is ill, injured or even dead? That he has been unfaithful?

It has been a perfect summer. Not only has the weather been perfect- hot, sunny, wonderful sunsets-but they have also moved into a newly built summer villa, tucked away by the lakes in the beautiful Augustów Forest. The children have played for days on end. She and her husband have often rowed out on the lake during the short, white nights of June to greet the rising sun. "All was peace and beauty...a quiet life full of simple pleasure."

It has to be said that the simplicity of her life is relative. The large villa is superbly furnished. She is surrounded the whole time by servants and domestics, who live in a special annexe. (Each of the five-year-old boys has a nanny and the six-year-old girl has her own governess. The children are taken round in a special pony-trap.) They move in the society of the best noble families in the region. They have spent the winter on the French Riviera. (The journey home was fast and simple: European borders are easy to cross and there is still no need for passports.) They have a number of residences: as well as the summer villa and the big house in Suwalki, they have an apartment in Warsaw. Laura de Turczynowicz, née Blackwell, has a sheltered, comfortable existence. She screams at the sight of a mouse. She is frightened of thunder. She is modest and rather shy. She scarcely knows how to cook.

In a photograph taken a summer or so earlier we can see a happy, proud and contented woman, dark blonde,

wearing a wide skirt, a white blouse and a large summer hat. We see someone used to a privileged and tranquil life, and a life that gets steadily better. She is by no means alone in that. Though there have been rumours of unrest and distant misdeeds, she has chosen to ignore them. And she is not alone in that, either.

So it really has been a perfect summer and it is still far from over. This evening they are supposed to be holding a lavish dinner party. But where is her husband? He has been working in Suwalki for several days and should have been back yesterday, in time for the party. They held back dinner for him but he did not arrive. This is not like him at all and she is growing more and more concerned. Where can he be? She waits, watches. Still no sign. She has not been this worried for a long time. What can have happened? She does not fall asleep until it is almost morning.

Laura is woken by a violent banging on the window.

It is four o'clock in the morning.

She leaps up to quieten the noise as quickly as possible, before it wakes the children. She can see a figure down below the window. Her first, confused thought is that it is one of the servants on the way to the market and in need of something-money or instructions, perhaps. To her amazement she is greeted by the pale and earnest face of Jan, her husband's manservant. He passes her a card. The handwriting is her husband's.

She reads: "War is declared. Come immediately with the children. Let the servants pack up what you wish to bring and come on later in the day."

Tuesday, 4 August 1914

Elfriede Kuhr watches the 149th Infantry regiment leaving Schneidemühl

A summer evening. Warm air. Faint music in the distance. Elfriede and her brother are indoors, at home at Alte Bahnhofstrasse 17, but they can hear the sound. It slowly grows louder and they realise what is happening. They rush out into the street and away towards the yellow fortress-like railway station. The square in front of the station is swarming with people and the electric lighting is on-Elfriede thinks that the drab white light makes the leaves on the chestnut trees look as if they are made of paper.

She climbs up on the iron railings that separate the station building from the crowded square. The music is coming nearer. She sees a goods train standing waiting at Platform 3. She sees that the engine is steamed up. She sees that the wagon doors are open and through them she catches a glimpse of reservists, still in civilian clothes, going off to be mobilised. The men lean out and wave and laugh. Meanwhile the sounds of the music are growing louder and louder, ringing out clearly through the air of the summer evening. Her brother shouts: "They're coming! Here comes the 149th!"

This is what everyone has been waiting for: the 149th Infantry Regiment, the town's own unit. They are on their way to the Western Front. "The Western Front"-a very new term indeed, and Elfriede has never heard of such a thing until today. The war is about the Russians, isn't it? Everyone knows that. The German army is mobilising in response to the Russian mobilisation and everyone knows that the Russians are going to attack soon. It is the threat from the east that is occupying the minds of people living here in Pomerania, and Schneidemühl is no exception to that. The Russian border lies less than a hundred miles away and the main railway line from Berlin to Königsberg runs through the town, which will presumably make it a self-evident target for the powerful enemy in the east.

The same thing is true, more or less, of the people of Schneidemühl as of the politicians and generals who, fumbling, groping and stumbling, have led Europe into war: information exists but it is almost always incomplete or out of date, and for lack of facts has been padded out with guesses, suppositions, hopes, fears, idées fixes, conspiracy theories, dreams, nightmares and rumours. Just as in tens of thousands of other towns and villages all over the continent, the picture of the world in Schneidemühl these days has been formed out of hazy and deceptive material of that kind-rumour, in particular. Elfriede Kuhr is twelve years old, a restless and intelligent girl with sandy-coloured hair and green eyes. She has heard people say that French planes have bombed Nuremberg, that a railway bridge near Eichenried has been attacked, that Russian troops are moving towards Johannesburg, that Russian agents tried to murder the Crown Prince in Berlin, that a Russian spy attempted to blow up the aeroplane factory on the edge of town, that a Russian agent tried to infect the communal water supply with cholera and that a French agent has tried to blow up the bridges over the River Küddow.

None of this is true, but that emerges only later. Just now people seem prepared to believe anything, the more unbelievable the better.

For the people of Schneidemühl, as for the majority of Germans, this is ultimately seen as a defensive war, a war that has been forced on them and which they have no choice but to see through to its conclusion. They and their counterparts in similar towns and villages in Serbia, Austria-Hungary, Russia, France, Belgium and Great Britain are filled with both fear and hope and, not least, with a warm and powerful feeling of self-righteousness because they are now facing a momentous struggle against the forces of darkness. A wave of emotions surges over Schneidemühl, Germany and Europe, sweeping everything and everyone before it. But what we perceive as darkness is to them light.

Elfriede hears her brother shouting and then she sees it for herself. Here they come, row upon row of soldiers in grey uniforms, short boots of pale, untanned leather, huge knapsacks and pickelhaubes with grey cloth covers. A military band is marching in front and as they approach the great crowd of people at the station they strike up the tune that everyone knows so well. The soldiers sing it and, when they come to the chorus, the spectators immediately join in. The song roars out like thunder in the August night:

Lieb' Vaterland, magst ruhig sein

Lieb' Vaterland, magst ruhig sein

Fest steht und treu die Wacht, die Wacht am Rhein!

Fest steht und treu die Wacht, die Wacht am Rhein!

The air reverberates to the sound of drums, the tramp of boots, the singing and the cheering. Elfriede notes in her diary:

Then the 149th marched up shoulder to shoulder and streamed onto the platform like a grey tidal wave. All the soldiers had long garlands of flowers around their necks or pinned on their breasts. Asters, stocks and roses stuck out of the rifle barrels as if they were intending to shoot flowers at the enemy. The soldiers' faces were serious. I had expected them to be laughing and exultant.

Elfriede does, however, see one laughing soldier-a lieutenant whom she recognises. His name is Schön and she watches him bidding farewell to his relations and then pushing his way through the crowd. She sees the bystanders patting him on the back, embracing him and kissing him. She wants to shout to him, "Hello,

Lieutenant Schön," but she doesn't dare.

The music plays, a sea of hats and handkerchiefs waves above the crowd, the train with the civilian-clad reservists whistles and pulls away, and everyone in the crowd cheers, shouts and waves. The 149th will soon be leaving too. Elfriede jumps down from the railings. She is swallowed up by the throng and feels as if she is being smothered. She sees an old woman, eyes red with weeping, who is screaming in heart-rending tones: "Little Paul! Where is my little Paul? Let me at least see my son!" Elfriede, standing there crushed in this jostling and jolting mass of backs and arms and bellies and legs, does not know who Paul is. Shaken, or possibly simply thankful to have something to focus on in this overwhelming confusion of images and sounds and emotions, Elfriede says a quick prayer: "Please God, protect this Paul and bring him back to the woman! Please God, please, please, please!"

She watches the soldiers march past and a little boy alongside her sticks his hand pleadingly through the cold bars of the iron railings: "Soldier, soldier, goodbye!" One of the grey-uniformed men reaches out and shakes the hand: "Farewell, little brother!" Everyone laughs, the band plays "Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles" and some of the crowd sing along with it. A long train, decorated with flowers, puffs into Platform 1. At a call on the bugle the soldiers immediately begin to climb aboard to the sounds of oaths, jokes and commands. A soldier hurrying to catch up with the rest passes Elfriede as she stands there behind the railings. She plucks up courage and stretches out her hand to him, shyly mumbling, "Good luck!" He looks at her, smiles and takes her hand as he passes: "Until we meet again, little girl!"

Elfriede's eyes follow him and watch him climb into one of the goods wagons. She sees him turn round and look at her. Then the train jerks into motion, slowly at first and then faster.

The cheering rose to a roar, the soldiers' faces crowded in the open doors, flowers flew through the air and all at once many of the people in the square began to weep.

"Until we meet again! We'll be home with you soon!"

"Don't be afraid! We'll soon be back!"

"We'll be back to celebrate Christmas with Mum!"

"Yes, yes, yes-come back in one piece!"

And from the moving train comes the sound of a powerful song. She can catch only part of the refrain: "...in der Heimat, in der Heimat, da gibt's ein Wiedersehen!" Then the wagons disappear into the night and are gone. Into the darkness and warm air of summer.

Elfriede is deeply moved. She walks home, choking back tears. As she walks she holds the hand the soldier touched out in front of her as if it contains something very valuable and very fragile. As she climbs the badly lit steps to the porch of Alte Bahnhofstrasse 17 she kisses her hand, quickly.

Sarah Macnaughtan returns to London today, 4 August, after a long and enjoyable stay in the country. The summer this year has been unusually hot and sunny and there has been nothing to disturb the profound peace that she and her friends have enjoyed. (The news of the double murder in the Balkans, which reached them at haymaking time, was quickly forgotten, or repressed, or simply filed away as yet another of those regrettable but distant events that unfortunately occur from time to time.) She writes:

Hardly anyone believed in the possibility of war until they came back from their August Bank Holiday visits and found soldiers saying good- bye to their families at the stations. And even then there was an air of unreality about everything, which rendered realisation difficult. We saw women waving handkerchiefs to the men who went away, and holding up their babies to railway carriage windows to be kissed [...] We were breathless, not with fear, but with astonishment.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ila Robinette:

Reading a reserve tends to be new life style within this era globalization. With examining you can get a lot of information which will give you benefit in your life. Having book everyone in this world could share their idea. Ebooks can also inspire a lot of people. Many author can inspire their reader with their story as well as their experience. Not only the storyplot that share in the ebooks. But also they write about the data about something that you need example of this. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your sons or daughters, there are many kinds of book that exist now. The authors on earth always try to improve their expertise in writing, they also doing some analysis before they write with their book. One of them is this The Beauty and the Sorrow: An Intimate History of the First World War.

Timothy Roesch:

The book untitled The Beauty and the Sorrow: An Intimate History of the First World War contain a lot of information on it. The writer explains her idea with easy method. The language is very easy to understand all the people, so do not necessarily worry, you can easy to read that. The book was compiled by famous author. The author gives you in the new period of time of literary works. You can actually read this book because you can read on your smart phone, or gadget, so you can read the book inside anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can open up their official web-site and order it. Have a nice study.

Shawn Young:

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Ruby Guillen:

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