



Soldier and Warrior: French Attitudes toward the Army and War on the Eve of the First World War (Contributions in Military Studies)

H. L. Wesseling

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In France the decade preceding the outbreak of the First World War was characterized by a revival of nationalism and militarism. Wesseling analyzes the ideas current in France in this period about the use, value, and beauty of war, the army, and army life. In examining the French army of the period, Wesseling found that at the same time that new forms were sought, old values were being emphasized. Attempts at reforms were most frequent in those areas where antimilitarist writers had concentrated their criticism. Next to this there also was a new glorification of traditional military virtues: disinterestedness, submission, and discipline.

In conceptualizing war, as Wesseling shows, a distinction can be made between speculations on war as a concrete phenomenon and as an abstract notion. During the period, war was looked upon as a factor of renewal and regeneration. The years from 1905 to 1914 were of great importance for the history of the military problem in France. A new appreciation of the ideals that were preached in the army came into being. Though this did not lead to militarism in the sense that the military determined politics, as Wesseling illustrates, it did lead to a militarist attitude.

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