



Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War (Making of the Modern World)

Alan Kramer

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On 26 August 1914 the world-famous university library in the Belgian town of Louvain was looted and destroyed by German troops. The international community reacted in horror - 'Holocaust at Louvain' proclaimed the Daily Mail - and the behaviour of the Germans at Louvain came to be seen as the beginning of a different style of war, without the rules that had governed military conflict up to that point - a more total war, in which enemy civilians and their entire culture were now 'legitimate' targets.

Yet the destruction at Louvain was simply one symbolic moment in a wider wave of cultural destruction and mass killing that swept Europe in the era of the First World War. Using a wide range of examples and eye-witness accounts from across Europe at this time, award-winning historian Alan Kramer paints a picture of an entire continent plunging into a chilling new world of mass mobilization, total warfare, and the celebration of nationalist or ethnic violence - often directed expressly at the enemy's civilian population.

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