

## FEATURED REVIEW

Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918. Band XI. Die Habsburgermonarchie und der Erste Weltkrieg. 1. Teilband. Der Kampf um die Neuordnung Mitteleuropas. Teil 1. Vom Balkanenkrieg zum Weltkrieg. Teil 2. Vom Vielvölkerstaat Österreich-Ungarn zum neuen Europa der Nationalstaaten. Edited by Helmut Rumpler. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2016. 1521 pp.

For more than 40 years, the “Habsburgermonarchie” series has been a shining lighthouse for every scholar of Central Europe in the nineteenth century. Launched in 1973 with the first volume on the economic history of the Habsburg Empire, it has already yielded eleven large thematic overviews, very often consisting of several volumes, which now are considered standard works of reference in the field. The changing editorial team, with its core at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, has thus been able to coordinate the emergence of a unique book series. After more than 40 years of continuous publishing, the whole series today not only offers valuable insights into the history of the Habsburg Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century, but has also become a monument in the history of historiography.

Until last year, however, the volumes concentrated largely on the history of the Monarchy prior to World War I. The history of the war itself started to become an integral part of the series only in 2016, most probably in part as a consequence of the boom in the scholarly and popular activity connected to the 2014 centenary. Like the whole series, the shift towards the history of World War I is very deep and elaborate. The first of the two volumes entitled *From the Balkan Conflict to World War* deals with the prelude to the war and the overall history of the Dual Monarchy during the war. The second volume, *From Multinational Austria-Hungary to New Europe of Nation States*, includes essays on the war history of particular nations and closes the two-volume work with a focus on the diplomatic outcomes of the war and general reflection on the last years of the Habsburg Empire. The editorial team does not intend to bring the discussion of the history of the war to an end with these two volumes, which are supplemented by a separate work on the war statistics, and one more volume on the historiography of the war as it emerged throughout the twentieth century will follow.

As the title of the first volume and the overall structure of both volumes suggest, the work examines the war as the culmination of developments which took place in the preceding decades. Manfred Rauchensteiner, Günter Kronnenbitter, and Hew Strachan trace these developments in the cultural and political climate of the late Habsburg Monarchy, in the system of its political and executive power, and in the changing international role of the “regional empire,” as Strachan refers to the Monarchy. All three opening essays trace continuities which connect the war and the prewar period and provide a brief yet useful introduction to the following part, which deals with the war itself.

Here, the work tackles selected issues beyond the national framework, concentrating on the actual military operations, the mobilization of the hinterland, and the economic and cultural aspects, leading to the demise of the monarchy. Martin Moll and Erwin Schmidl trace the changed nature of the total war, which demanded a completely new institutional, social, but also mental setup. The restructuring of economic production, far-fetched use of social-Darwinist thought for the cultural framing of the war, and the large number of displaced persons all generated a completely new context in which the very meaning of statehood and citizenship was reshaped. Lutz Musner complements this discussion with an examination of the experiences of soldiers on the frontlines, where individuals were considered “human material.”

The section on “economic exhaustion and cultural change” emphasizes predominantly the economic aspects of war restructuring. Tamara Scheer, Anatol Schmied-Kowarzik, and Ágnes Pogány provide an informative and factually rich overview of the economic legislation and practices brought about by the outbreak of war and its long duration, which drove the state deeper and deeper into debt. Mark Cornwall traces the reshaping of the cultural sphere on the basis of the example of propaganda that was able to use some of the most prominent writers and journalists of the empire and shaped not only the war morale of the citizenry, but also a large segment of contemporary cultural production. Alfred Pfoser and Wolfgang Maderthaner devote attention to the view from below, and capture the changing cultural patterns predominantly in the German-speaking part of the monarchy, beyond the state-driven propaganda. They examine the other side of the coin, i.e. the widespread frustration with and depression because of the protracted war, which eventually climaxed in widespread revolts, paving the way to the dissolution of the monarchy.

The first volume of the two-volume work suggests at first sight that it tries to capture the history of war beyond the national framework, and the topics seem

to have been chosen so as to transcend traditional national narratives. However, most of the contributions use predominantly sources written in German in support of their arguments. The authors also contextualize their studies by drawing on recently published scholarship in English and, where appropriate, Hungarian. There is only sparing mention of sources in other languages, however, limited often to only a few references to older articles and books, and the inquiry occasionally seems to forget the complexity and, indeed, plurality of its subject, i.e. the Habsburg Monarchy as a whole. Hence, the first volume can serve as an outstanding introduction to the current state of the scholarship on the policies and experiences of war. The contributions present a large methodological and topical overview and provide primarily a lively and informative read. On the other hand, by prioritizing sources and literature in German, they also, if in a very subtle way, tend to reproduce the German-centered perspective of the warring empire itself.

As has already become something of a custom in the whole series, this should be outweighed by the second large part that accommodates chapters separated by particular nationalities living in the empire. Entitled “The Nations of the Empire,” this section follows the compartmentalized histories of Germans, Czechs, Poles, Slovenes, and the other nationalities, which were often written by local authors. The frequently underlying script is the gradual alienation of the respective nation from the state. The reproduction of old imperial hierarchies becomes clear when one looks at the structure of the volume. The first two chapters are devoted to the Austrian Germans and the Hungarians. Germans, according to Holger Afferbach, tried to unite loyalty towards the multinational Empire with their German nationalism. Afferbach traces the intricate relations between Berlin and Vienna and the internal engagement of the German national political elites in the Habsburg Monarchy to paint a picture of a self-confident group, which was gradually losing ground. Dániel Szabó provides a very dense narrative, which follows a similar trajectory. By examining nationalistic Hungarian politics, he is able to show the growing alienation of some of the leading Hungarian politicians from the idea of a joint state.

Ivan Šedivý, Dušan Kováč, and Marko Trogrlic tell a similar story for the Czech, Slovak, and South Slav cases. The total mobilization for war, they argue, created unsurmountable divisions between the respective nations and the state, and this contributed to the increasing prominence of the separatist movements, paving the way for the postwar creation of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. The chapters in this section present a predominantly political history of Habsburg

repression and anti-Habsburg resistance, which was accompanied by growing social protests and disillusionment with the non-functioning state. Piotr Szlanta offers a similarly intense political narrative for the Poles, in which he traces the impact of Russian occupation and the subsequent deepening crisis of the late war years, which preceded the collapse of Habsburg rule in Galicia. According to Harald Binder, like the Poles, Ukrainians living in the monarchy saw their bond with the Empire disappear primarily because of the clumsy state policies, which were unable to exploit original loyalties to the dynasty. Binder also provides a lot of statistical information to show the enormous humanitarian burden that the Ukrainian population had to suffer. As was true in Polish case, the peace of Brest-Litovsk provides a turning point for the narrative, from which Binder follows the political negotiations leading toward the Ukrainian independent state.

In contrast with the overall title, which emphasizes “The Nations,” the chapters present narratives focused more or less on politics and centered around “big men,” declarations, negotiations, and political alliances within as well as outside of the Habsburg monarchy. They deftly summarize what we already know about the political history of the last years of the Habsburg Empire and hence provide a fundamental source of information for anyone interested in the topic. However, the deep but at the same time somehow narrow focus also has limitations. The reader is left in confusion when it comes to the broader issues of the social and cultural history of the war. The essays often generally treat whole nations as given and stable units which were represented by a few politicians, and they only rarely ask questions which challenge the unifying narrative of vanishing loyalty.

For the Romanians of the empire, Razvan Paraianu tries to go beyond this horizon of classical political history. In his chapter, he also gives the reader an introductory overview of the Romanian historiography of the war, of the war in Romanian national memory, and of the gender and cultural history of Romanians during the war. The reader is given a wide overview of the Romanian experience of the war and its postwar framing, but once again, the nation is treated as a stable unit of analysis, and its political unity is presented as a teleological end of the war. In the Italian case, as was true in the eastern regions of the Monarchy, migration and refugees constituted a formative issue of the war. Elena Tonezzer and Stefan Wedrac summarize the most recent research (mostly written in Italian) and convincingly show how the mass movement of people, from evacuated civilians to the victims of Habsburg political repression, helped foment the radical nationalist program of Italian separatism.

If Habsburg history is compartmentalized into separate national sections, only one group is left as a loyal pillar of the state. Marsha L. Rozenblit’s chapter on Habsburg Jews is thus the only part that tells a somewhat different story. Rozenblit emphasizes the ongoing loyalty of the Habsburg Jews, for whom the Habsburg state was the guardian against rising nationalisms with their indivisible anti-Semitism. Even in this case, the issue of refugees from the eastern provinces played the key role, but the chapter also tackles the numerous charities that were intended to help the Habsburg state survive and evolve, as well as the widespread grief and nostalgia over the lost Empire.

After elaborating on the particular “national” experiences of the war, the two-volume opus magnum ends with a section entitled “Times are changing” (Gezeitenwechsel). Here, four essays, symptomatically authored by three Austrian historians and one Hungarian, trace the international dimension of the Empire’s demise. Lothar Höbelt examines deeply and informatively the diplomatic history of the Empire in its last four years. His study is supplemented by Helmut Rumpler’s informative overview of the various reform plans and changes in the internal organization of the imperial administration. Imre Részeg complements Rumpler’s chapter with a Hungarian perspective and tackles the debates about the changing status of the Hungarian Kingdom within the dualist state.

The work concludes with the Saint-Germain and Trianon treaties, as the diplomatic epilogues to the war and, with it, to the Habsburg Empire. The title of the respective essay, “The Imperialist Peace Order of Central Europe in the Treaties of Saint-Germain and Trianon,” already gives away the main argument. Arnold Suppan argues that the vanquished were pushed to respect the “capitalist economic and social order” (pp.1325–26). This might well leave an informed reader feeling a bit confused. Austria-Hungary and, even more so, imperial Germany had already been indispensable parts of the capitalist order before the war, whether through their position in global trade or through the internal organization of their societies and economies, which were structured around private entrepreneurship and the accumulation of profit. While there were attempts in the tumultuous postwar years to overthrow this setup in favor of radical leftist ideals, Germany and Austria retained major features of capitalist market economies in the 1920s. Suppan, however, not only reproduces the decades-old Marxist notion of the “bourgeois triumph” brought to central Europe by the victory of Entente powers. He also tries to show the irreparable damage that the new international order did to the vanquished states, and ends

with an ominous citation of George Clemenceau, according to which the Paris peace order only planted the seeds of a long and deep crisis of the future.

This quote brings to an end not only the whole two-volume work on World War I, but at the moment also the series itself. Hence, it provides the reader with a retrospective interpretation not only of the war, but also of the whole history of Habsburg Monarchy from 1848 until its demise. This interpretation draws on Marxist vocabulary together with the conservative post-Habsburg nostalgia to suggest that the war brought a triumph of the Western capitalist class which in the long run, however, only fostered the rise of Fascism and the cataclysm of World War II. After having read this as the final statement, the reader remains a bit puzzled, since this conclusion does not seem to correspond with many of the preceding essays, let alone the other volumes of the series.

Nevertheless, the two volumes still provide probably the factually richest and most comprehensive overview of the last years of the Habsburg Empire. Many chapters (predominantly in the first volume) are inspired by the social and cultural history of the war, and they provide a very interesting read, mainly on the experiences of the German speakers of the monarchy. The second part summarizes the political history of the Empire's nations and offers deep insights into the alienation of respective national political elites from the ideal of a common state.

However, if one reads the various chapters as a whole, an old imperial narrative from the prewar period comes to mind. Imperial ethnographers and popularizers of science in the nineteenth century often portrayed the Habsburg Empire as "united in diversity." The ethnic, linguistic and cultural varieties of its nations were seen as one of the monarchy's greatest assets, which, however, were united by the common high culture and administration emanating from the Empire's German and, later, Hungarian-speaking centers. Along this line, most of the topics of the two volumes, which are intended to go beyond the national narratives, is found in the first volume and written by German-speaking and, to lesser extent, Hungarian-speaking and English-speaking authors. A seemingly unifying narrative is presented which should connect the experiences of all of the peoples of the Monarchy, but which is based primarily on German or Hungarian sources and the perspectives of Vienna and Budapest. It is the second volume that gives place to the diversity of particular nations and invites local authors to contribute with their distinctive national perspectives. This perspective focuses primarily on the activities of national political representatives, which it then substitutes for the nations these people were claiming to represent.

Historiographically, the two volumes thus represent disparate works. While the first one offers insight into a wide range of social and cultural topics on which historians have written since the 1990s, the second tends to reproduce the old political history approaches, firmly grounded in older narratives of particular national historiographies. Nevertheless, both volumes together still confirm the central position of the whole book series within the scholarship on the history of the late Habsburg Empire. For anyone dealing with World War I and the Habsburg monarchy, it is an outstandingly valuable reference work, which can serve as a useful introduction for further study as well as a source of rich details on a wide range of topics.

Rudolf Kučera  
Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences