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Seamus Dunn, T. G. Fraser, eds. *Europe and Ethnicity: The First World War and Contemporary European Conflict.* London and New York: Routledge, 1996. xi + 218 pp. $135.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-11995-5; $38.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-415-11996-2.

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European Ethnicity and the Legacy of the First World War

It is the stated thesis of this collection of essays that "a number of the current political conflicts in the world are leftovers or unfinished business from the First World War" (p. 1). The editors make clear that the "leftovers" they wish to explore resulted from border settlements that created minority enclaves, disputed frontiers, and various irredenta, a group of issues which they subsume under the term "ethnic conflict."

The editors' conception of the book's purpose raises three issues of definition. First, is World War I the real source of the problems the book wishes to discuss, or would the post-war settlements be a more accurate point of departure for the analysis? Alternately, perhaps it is the legacy of prewar nationalism, envenomed and spread by the conflict, which is the real theme. Second, although the book specifically addresses "Europe," it omits what a reader may well anticipate, an essay on, say, Romania, but includes a chapter on the Middle East. Third, the term "ethnicity" is required to bear much analytical weight, and yet the opening effort at its elucidation is not particularly successful: "The origins of ethnic disputes are usually connected with one or more of a set of fundamental forms of human association (and therefore separateness) such as religion, politics, race, ethnicity and culture" (p. 6). Whereas the term "ethnicity" certainly eludes easy definition, this understanding of the term is not very helpful as it would make it virtually meaningless in its mutability.

A brief introductory essay by the editors argues that the complexity of the ethnographic structure of Europe presented an overpowering problem to the Paris peacemakers, themselves divided over the applicability of "Wilsonianism," which is implicitly defined as national self-determination. Alan Sharp next elaborates on this theme in a chapter that sets the stage for the remainder of the volume. We may regret the failure to provide a more thorough linkage between the war and subsequent ethnic difficulties. Here a relationship between the rise of late nineteenth century nationalist passions and the nature of the war is central.[1] The duration, intensity, and mass conscription of the war certainly raised the level of expectation of the participating societies, but also generalized those passions more broadly.

Sharp raises the minorities treaties at Paris (which probably should have been the subject of a separate chapter), but fails to consider the whole question of borders in relation to minorities at Paris. Also, Sharp's interpretation of certain issues is problematical. For instance, he argues that the failure of plebiscites in East Prussia or Upper Silesia to produce results reflecting the prewar census (i.e. the German vote was higher than the supposed number of Germans) casts "doubt on the assumptions made about the political importance of language or race" (p. 24). The strong German showing certainly reflects, overwhelmingly, the understandable preference of voters for a large, reasonably prosperous state over a small and poor one which, in 1920 (at the crisis of the Polish-Russian War), had problematical chances of survival.

The remainder of the book consists of essays dealing with Yugoslavia, the Czechs and Slovaks, Trentino and Tyrol, Hungary, Ukraine, the Baltic states, the Middle East, and Ireland. The selection reflects the goal of addressing the major European ethnic problems exposed by the war or Peace Conference that have survived to our day. Thus Poland is missing, though it was the *locus classicus* of the conference's frustrations over ethnic and border issues, because it now has hardly any of these problems. Germany, whose border and ethnic problems are central to an understanding of modern Europe, today faces ethnic problems quite distinct from those of the war era. Hence, the exclusion of both is understandable. However, other essays are problematic. For example: Ukraine, which was a marginal issue in the war and was dealt with at Paris largely derivatively, now has a poten-

tially very considerable ethnic problem with its substantial Russian population. How the war or peace conference caused Kiev's current ethnic difficulties, however, is not at all clear. By comparison, according to the dual criteria of contemporaneity and 1914-1919 origins, essays on the Czechs and Slovaks, Hungary, or South Slav issues are obvious candidates for inclusion. Ireland is certainly not unreasonable. The chapter on the Middle East is *sui generis*.

Ann Lane's essay on Yugoslavia requires little comment. The author essentially argues that the ethnic components of the interwar Yugoslav state "were not prepared to evolve into consocialisation" (p. 36). Consequently Yugoslavia was a vain pursuit and has visibly failed. This thesis may appear a bit too wise after the fact, and perhaps gives too little attention to what is currently judged a failed option, but was not always and universally so regarded. Scholarship only a few years ago did not judge Yugoslavia so foredoomed an enterprise.[2] Lane also does not give sufficient weight to the role of international factors in sustaining, and later undermining, the cohesion of post-World War II Yugoslavia.[3]

W.V. Wallace's chapter on the Czechs and Slovaks argues that the unity of Czechoslovakia was always merely a facade, a unity kept in dynamic cohesion by external pressures; absent these its disintegration was inevitable. Like Lane's analysis of the Yugoslav situation, this view would not have appeared so self-evident just a few years ago. Wallace discusses the obvious German and Slovak minority problems for interwar Czechoslovakia, and usefully raises the oft-neglected Sub-Carpathian Ruthenian issue. His closing remarks about the possibility of future difficulties arising from Trianon's legacy of a substantial Magyar minority in Slovakia neatly tie the chronological elements together. It would have been valuable to mention the Polish minority issue in the so-called Teschen region, which helped poison interwar cooperation, undermine regional alliances, and contributed to the vulnerability of Prague to outside threats.[4] Given the author's determination to link minority and security issues, this would have been thematically useful. Perhaps more significant is the very small space given to minority or ethnic problems facing the post-divorce Czech and Slovak states. The intriguing question of Moravian self-consciousness as well as the Roma issue deserve some discussion, and the large Magyar population of Slovakia–perhaps eleven percent of the country–deserves greater attention.

A.E. Alcock, who has written very extensively on the South Tyrol question, has presented a discussion of the current effort to create an Autonomous European Region Tyrol (the so-called AERT) as a direct outgrowth of the Austrian-Italian border settlement at Paris. His discussion of the origins of the problem is brief. His explanation for the border settlement, which clearly favored Italian over Austrian, ethnic German desiderata, is based on a few rather problematical assertions. The first is that the claims of multinational states were less regarded in the "new Europe" of 1919 (p. 69); which meant in fine that relatively nationally homogeneous Italy would prevail at the Peace Conference. But this is a general statement of dubious validity. Certainly the territorial integrity of the multi-ethnic (former) Russian Empire enjoyed the greatest solicitude from the Great Powers. The relative power of the claimant, or perhaps the inconsequentiality of the counter-claimant (marginally modified by the predilections of the peacemakers) would seem a more sure guide to whose territorial desiderata would be realized than any careful weighing of the degree of ethnic homogeneity of the contenders. Hence, weak Austria, the ruin of an empire, was not well suited to defend the Tyrol against Italian claims. Similarly, pathetic Hungary was helpless and likewise paid the price.

Raymond Pearson rather dramatically frames his topic by describing the Hungarians as "the longest-running, most intractable European minority concern of the twentieth century." He justifies this by noting that one-fourth of all Hungarians live outside, yet "tantalizingly close" to the national borders; this makes Hungary "a glaring geopolitical mismatch between statehood and nationhood," thus rendering current Hungary something other than a "nation-state" (pp. 88-89).

Pearson attributes the aggressive, intolerant, late nineteenth century passion for Magyarization to "a collective, almost genetically imprinted sense of insecurity," and he states Hungarian mistreatment of minorities was "legendary for centuries" (p. 92). This verdict seems provocative at the very least, as it generalizes from the rather special circumstances of the late nineteenth century and makes one current of Hungarian political culture not only dominant, but immutable and preemptive. In a book ostensibly linking World War I with "ethnic conflict," it would have been useful in this context to consider Peter Hanak's view that "The war brought the liberalism of the dualistic age into disrepute."[5]

Pearson correctly emphasizes the lingering effects of Trianon on Hungarian history, and has suggestively reviewed potential flashpoints along the frontier. A more extended treatment would have been useful, especially because the volume contains no essay on Romania, and

Lane's essay on Yugoslavia does not discuss the potentially serious issue of the Magyar minority in the Vojvodina.

Here I should like to raise an issue which applies to all of the essays, but is especially apt in the case of the Hungarians. The dynamic nature of ethnic problems cannot be discussed without serious attention to demographic factors. None of the essays gives this major consideration. In reality the demographic factor has two dimensions. First there are the simple numerical trends regarding the ethnic composition of a territory, a striking example of which is the growth of the Albanian minority in Kosovo. But perhaps of greater importance is the relationship of these numerical realities to the structure of national perceptions. Hence, to return to our example of Kosovo: can we not link aggressive Serbian nationalism regarding Croatia, or Bosnia at Yugoslavia's disintegration with the long-developing Serbian sensitivity to the rapid increase of the Albanian presence in the former cradle of medieval Serbia? The striking problem of low birthrate among Hungarians is thus doubly indicated: as a factor explaining the gradual weakening of their dreams of, for example, restoring Transylvania in light of ever growing Romanian preponderance, and as an element in the strikingly pessimistic coloration of contemporary Hungarian political culture.[6]

The longest essay in the collection is devoted to Ukraine, and written by Andrew Wilson. The author gives considerable attention to the pre-World War I origins of Ukrainian nationalism. He makes the important distinction between western Ukraine, with its Polish, Habsburg, and Roman-Uniate Catholic relationships and relatively precocious development of national consciousness, and the rather different world of eastern or Russian Ukraine. This positing of two Ukraines provides Wilson with a framework for his essay. In a concluding remark he significantly notes that the political balance of power in contemporary Ukraine lies in the eastern part of the country, not the west (p. 129). This, however, underscores the irrelevance of the legacy of Polish-Ukrainian minority issues, and the centrality of the Russian problem for Ukraine's future. Hence, the space Wilson gives to Polish-Ukrainian matters is of dubious utility for his presentation.

The essay on the Baltics by Ken Ward is perhaps the weakest contribution to the collection. It is a rather superficial overview of the area, based on a thesis attributed to Anthony D. Smith which ostensibly defines ethnic identity as "the creation of a 'cultural collectivity' ... with [the] ... emphasis on the role of history as the interpreter of change" (p. 139). Whereas Ward should be congratulated for his effort to construct some theoretical framework before plunging into the ethnic imbroglio, it is not clear why this definition is particularly apt for the Baltic peoples.

T.G. Fraser, the author of the essay entitled "Middle East: Partition and Reformation," is at pains to justify the presence of his topic in the volume which, he admits, may require "some special pleading." Although he contends quite correctly that the Ottoman Empire had been "part of the European 'system' during and after the First World War" (p. 158), I remain unpersuaded that this somehow renders the territorial determinations of the Middle East part of the legacy of *European* ethnic problems traceable to the First World War.

In the chapter on Ireland by Seamus Dunn and Thomas W. Hennessey, they contend that the First World War played a major role in the subsequent development of ethnic problems in Ireland: not because the war directly affected ethnic issues, but rather because it radically altered the context in which Irish issues developed. In effect, the war interrupted Irish history (p. 179). To justify this thesis the authors trace the turbulent efforts to solve the dual Irish problem of home rule for the island as a whole, and the cooperation between the Protestant minority in the north and the Roman Catholic majority. With the war the development of a pan-Irish identity, including both pro-British Protestants and Catholics, was doomed as the demands of the war pushed both communities into increasingly hostile relations, ultimately resulting in separatism and confrontation. This interpretation may give the First World War too large a role to play in the exacerbation of Irish difficulties, and hence suggest that these differences may have been otherwise resolvable. Nonetheless, it is a valuable perspective from which to consider both the Irish problems and the manifold and often indirect effects of the Great War.

The volume concludes with a broad interpretive essay on the meaning of the peace treaties and their effects on subsequent ethnic conflict by A. M. Gallagher. The author's initial counterpoise between the "balance-of-power" advocates and "Wilsonianism" based on "democratic ideals" is an excessive simplification. In stressing Wilson's idealism without consideration of the inherent geopolitical conservatism of his vision of Europe, the contrast with the so-called "balance of power" advocates is rather artificial.[7] The source of ethnic intolerance may have been located in the very *demos* which "Wilsonianism" is supposedly empowering. Would it be a reasonable conclusion that a greater victory for "Wilso-

nian" over "balance-of-power" principles might have exacerbated rather than ameliorated ethnic rivalries? Obviously, these questions would take us far beyond the confines of this volume.

The essential weakness of the book is the failure to develop a clear line of argument linking World War I to contemporary "ethnic conflict," leaving instead a series of well-crafted introductions to many–though not all–of the major minority issues of contemporary Europe; not an unworthy accomplishment. That these issues were profoundly affected by the war is beyond question. But, if the authors hoped to prove that the war was somehow the common and major cause of ethnic conflict in contemporary Europe, they have fallen short of their goal.

Notes:

[1]. A point emphasized in Brian Jenkins and Spyros A. Sofos, "Nation and Nationalism in Contemporary Europe: A theoretical perspective," in their _Nation and Identity in Contemporary Europe (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 19-20.

[2]. For an account which does not share the "doomed to fail" perspective see John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), reviewed in April, 1997 on HABSBURG. As recently as 1992 Dimitrije Djordjevic argued that Yugoslav unity, despite its faults, was preferable to any other solution; see his "The Yugoslav Phenomenon," in Joseph Held, ed., *The Columbia History of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 342.

[3]. A recent work which gives much emphasis to the international context of the fate of Yugoslavian unity is James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), esp. 20 ff. A review of this book will appear on HABSBURG later today.

[4]. See Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Twilight of French Eastern Alliances, 1926-1936: French-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from Locarno to the Remilitarization of the Rhineland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[5]. Peter Hanak and Joseph Held, "Hungary on a Fixed Course: An Outline of Hungarian History," in Held, *Columbia History of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, 165.

[6]. This latter phenomenon was well formulated in as yet unpublished remarks by Istvan Deak delivered at the 55th Annual Conference of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences at Fordham University in June 20, 1997 entitled "East Central Europe: A New Look: The Hungarians."

[7]. I have dealt with this theme extensively in "The Wilsonian View of Poland: Idealism and Geopolitical Traditionalism" in John S. Micgiel, ed., *Wilsonian East Central Europe* (New York: The Pilsudski Institute, 1995), 123-145.

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