

Mark Cornwall, John Paul Newman. *Sacrifice and Rebirth: The Legacy of the Last Habsburg War.* New York: Berghahn Books, 2016. 306 S., 20. Abb. \$120.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-78238-848-7.

Reviewed by Rudolf Kucera

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Remembrance matters not only regarding the past, but above all regarding the present. And, as Jay Winter has shown, remembrance of the First and Second World Wars matters fundamentally, with the former paving the way for the remembrance boom connected with the latter. Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven 2006. However, at least in the English-speaking world, not much has been written on how the First World War was remembered in East-Central Europe and how vital the various facets of this remembrance were for establishing and challenging the local interwar societies. The volume edited by Mark Cornwall and John Paul Newman is a great step in this direction. The editors have divided the essays into three major groups. The first one tackles the issues of how the war is remembered among the war losers, the second among its winners, and the third one focuses on those cases where the new geopolitical setting made it difficult to remember the war at all.

Among the vanquished German and Hungarian speaking people of the region, as the essays in the first section show, the war sacrifice of some could have been used to overshadow the suffering of others, while at the same time providing a firm ground for the remobilization of some of the returning soldiers for a further quest for “national rebirth.” Maureen Healy and Catherine Edge-

combe trace the different meanings attached to the four-year long slaughter by the postwar Austrian republic – meanings that were highly incompatible with each other and contributed to the inner polarization of the interwar Austrian state. While the various political camps similarly overlooked the Jewish and female wartime sacrifice, they differed substantially in their views on who actually suffered and why. The interpretations of wartime sacrifice from the loyalist Habsburg groups to the republican left created a plethora of memory cultures that did not share even the most basic assumptions, and contributed heavily to the collapse of the interwar Austrian republic.

This “lack of shared meaning” of the Great War played a role in making space for fantasies of a better future built on the ideals of militarized masculinity cultivated in the trenches. Robert Gerwarth follows this direction in Austria and Hungary, where the imperial break-up led to the paramilitarization of some of the war returnees and to the perpetuation, sometimes even gradation, of violent practices towards various adversaries. In the environment of Czechoslovakia's ethnic Germans, as shown by Mark Cornwall, the relatively swift reclaiming of the state authority prevented a similar paramilitarization. But even here a distinct masculine movement evolved among the Sudeten Germans, which championed a German nationalist agenda combined with idealized notions of manhood forged by the Great

War. The structurally similar case of the Transylvanian Magyars who, just like Sudeten-Germans, became, after 1918, a defeated minority in a winning state, provides a rather different story. As Franz Horváth points out, those who remained in Transylvania were, unlike Sudeten-Germans in Czechoslovakia, largely prevented from developing a thorough memorial culture by the Romanian regime, while those who fled to Hungary were able to incorporate their wartime sacrifice into the complex nationalistic narrative of national renewal.

However, war remembrance also played a key role in the creation of the narratives connecting the victors. Melissa Bokovoy, Nancy M. Wingfield, Katya Kocourek, and Rebecca Haynes look at how the particular form of war remembrance in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Romania cemented the narrative of victory and contributed to the shape of interwar societies. In all these victorious states, an official triumphant notion of masculine sacrifice and heroism emerged that overshadowed any other narratives. In the Serbian case, Bokovoy shows how the state authorities continued to use war photographs, which were collected in order to bolster support for the Serbian position within the Entente, far into the interwar period. Her chapter masterfully unravels how the pictorial evidence from the battlefields could have been intentionally reframed in order to serve changing political goals. Hence, the same wartime photographs could have shown sacrifice and victimhood just like heroism and courage. The merging of all these meanings created a tight narrative of Serbian masculine heroism, which overshadowed any other kind of suffering but that of (Serbian) men on the front.

In Czechoslovakia, the remembrance of the actually small military encounter at Zborov, where for the first time on the Eastern front Czech legionaries fought against and defeated Austro-Hungarian troops, served as the main basis for the creation of the notion of Czechoslovak

legionary heroism. Although occasionally challenged by the Slovak national parties or by the Communists, this narrative remained central in forging the official Czechoslovak interpretation of the war. The state considered the Czechoslovak legionary as the only real embodiment of meaningful war sacrifice throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

A very similar role, although in differing social and political conditions, was played by the legionary movement in Romania. Although many of the Romanian legionnaires, unlike their Czech counterparts, actually did not actively engage in the war, their movement in the late 1920s and during the 1930s was nevertheless informed by similar notions of militarized and nationalized masculinity. In the Romanian case, however, the legions were seen as a major threat by the royal regime. Worn down by the state oppression, the movement eventually turned to outspoken fascist positions, a move partly observable in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia as well, but not to such an extent.

The drawing of new borders and the persistence of multi-ethnic states in the region, however, made it in some cases hard to express any interpretation of war sacrifice at all. This was most visible among those who fought for the vanquished empires, but who ended up on the side of the war victors. The cases of interwar Yugoslavia's non-Serbian nationalities are investigated by John Paul Newman and Petra Svoljšak, while Christoph Mick and Laurence Cole complement the Yugoslav case with their takes on the war remembrance in interwar Poland and Tyrol. The Yugoslav and Polish cases in particular show the various paths the new interwar societies could adopt regarding the interpretation of the war and the construction of the new order. In Yugoslavia, the Serbian narrative prevailed not only as a part of the official memory, but also as a part of everyday social policies, leaving former imperial soldiers in a strikingly uneven position to their Serbian counterparts. The Polish state initially

tried precisely the opposite, i.e. to unite all the veterans (with the exception of Ukrainian soldiers fighting against Poland in 1918) under the politics of unified social provisions. In both cases, however, these differing approaches delivered very similar results. While in Yugoslavia the Slovene or Croat veterans felt rather alienated from the state, in Poland the strongly organized Polish legionnaires criticized the state's equalizing approach, emphasizing the importance of their own sacrifice above that of others. Thus, internal divisions within the veteran community emerged and, similarly to Yugoslavia, competing claims were articulated.

The case of war remembrance in Tyrol is actually structurally a mirror opposite of the Polish or Yugoslav cases. The partitioning of the region after the war generated a delicate situation, where a threefold framework for interpreting the war sacrifices was created. In the northern part of the region that remained part of Austria after 1918, the former imperial officers tried to monopolize the public memory of the war. However, in casting the war as a heroic endeavor they were rather unsuccessful vis-à-vis the general population's memory of the time as full of suffering and shortage. In the southern part of Tyrol, the war remembrance was framed by the aggressive Italianization of the area after 1922. However, even here the authorities mostly failed in facilitating a widespread and shared memory. The German-speaking population refused to accept the official Italian war remembrance, culminating in the erection of the victory monument in Bolzano/Bozen in 1928 – a detested symbol of national humiliation. Thus, it was only in the southernmost portion of the former Habsburg Empire, in the Trentino region, where the national Italian remembrance could gain ground, and it very quickly became part of a larger “Risorgimento” narrative of Italian national unification, partly paralleling the Fascist memorial agenda.

The editors have succeeded in putting together a group of essays that address some of the key aspects of the memory cultures of interwar East-Central Europe. Although not all the essays follow the same research questions, and some seem to be more embedded in traditional national history narratives than others, all the chapters are intertwined and allow for cross-cutting observations beyond the individual national cases. While the editors organized the essays so as to make an argument for a threefold typology of the war remembrance in the region, the individual chapters, when read together, also offer insights that transcend the key divisions produced by war defeat or victory. By following the many ways in which the Great War was framed and interpreted all over the former Habsburg Monarchy, this collection provides a fantastic foundation for fresh and thought-provoking comparisons throughout Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and makes a strong argument for overcoming the hitherto prevailing focus on single successor states.

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