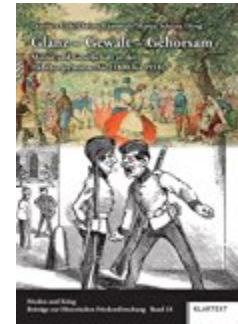


Laurence Cole, Christa Hämmerle, Martin Scheutz, eds. *Glanz-Gewalt-Gehorsam: Militär und Gesellschaft in der Habsburgermonarchie (1800 bis 1918)*. Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2011. Illustrations. 433 pp. \$26.49 (paper), ISBN 978-3-8375-0409-5.

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Different Ways of Viewing Habsburg Military History

This is a curious book. It contains, for example, a useful review of sources on Austrian military history from 1800 to 1918, concentrating on the role of the *Kriegsarchiv* (the war archives) written by Michael Hochedlinger. It also provides a bibliography of sorts on the period, which advertises every minor article by its compilers but which excludes, for example, my own work, *The Survival of the Habsburg Empire: Radetzky, the Imperial Army and the Class War, 1848* (1979), no doubt a topic of minor importance in the eyes of the editors. Their book, self-evidently, is not one that covers conventional military history in any sense. Indeed, the editors, Laurence Cole, Christa Hämmerle, and Martin Scheutz, are at pains in the introduction to stress that this collection is part of the “new military history,” which is at best interdisciplinary and should contain gender history and history of sexuality. (A much better discussion of new military history, by the way, can be found in the introductory essay in Hans-Henning Kortün’s edited collection *Krieg im Mittelalter* [2001].)

At the end of their introduction, despite their previous allusion to new military history, the editors reach two “preliminary conclusions” that seem distinctly old-fashioned: “First, male and female historians, instead of pursuing the common cliché of the supranational k.(u).k. army as the ‘bulwark’ of the state or even pursuing an overarching nationality question that obscures the complexity of social reality, should view the military as a polarising institution in late Habsburg society. Certainly,

the army could still then perform a role of upholding the state, whether in respect of the continuous maintenance of domestic order through the use of force or with respect to the potentially integrating effect of military service. But equally, the military strengthened social and political divisions. For example the three year active military service introduced in 1868, which was usually followed by seven years in the reserve and two years in the *Landsturm* must also be understood with respect to this ambivalence—even if the principle of universal male military service could be more or less successfully enforced in all regions of the Monarchy until World War One. At the same time, it must however be mentioned that these social divisions cannot simply be equated with ethnic dividing lines. Next to Czech ‘anti-militarism’ there was also, for example, a significant ‘Czech loyalty’ in the veterans’ associations. The opposition of leading Hungarian politicians to the common army was not simply a rejection of the principle of a standing army, but much more an attempt to strengthen the national *Honvéd* as a self-sufficient army. Regarding the position of the military in the Habsburg state, contradictory tendencies took place at the same time” (pp. 27-28). Is this the end result of the new military history in Austria? That some young men did not like serving twelve years in the army whatever their nationality? That Hungarian politicians really wanted a stronger national army rather than no army at all? These are not cutting-edge arguments.

The second conclusion reads as follows: “Secondly,

military historical investigations of the Habsburg Monarchy must be 'normalised' in the European context—a stronger comparative perspective would make clearer differences and similarities with other European states. Instead of overemphasising the relative weaknesses of the Habsburg Monarchy as a great power at the beginning of the twentieth century more emphasis should be given to the separate components of the Austro-Hungarian state, and not only with respect to debates over the outbreak of the First World War, in which the role of the German Empire occupied an ever more dominant position. The military monarchy of the Habsburgs must also be examined compared with other states in its various participations in wars around the middle of the nineteenth century and in its interventions abroad (for example in the Italian states in the 1820s)—again with the absolutely necessary aim, that this complex of countries must also be understood as part of the process of militarization in Europe in the 'long nineteenth century.' There is therefore a field of research on order, which if tough in its historical research demands, promises to be fascinating to a high degree in its potential to produce fertile tools of explanation" (p. 28). Perhaps the editors should read the rich Hungarian and Italian literature on the periods to which they point—or even books on the mid-nineteenth century by me and Istvan Deak. Or perhaps we should all just marvel at another naïve conclusion. We need comparative history. How come no one ever thought of that before?

The really curious point about the book is that these conclusions, however underwhelming they may seem, do not even connect with the essays it contains. The contributions are divided into four sections: "Areas of Experience—Sex and Power," "Militarization—Paths and Detours" "Culture—Images and Memories," and "Norms—Establishing and Infringing." However, there is no great coherence of topics, and several essays could appear in sections other than the ones they are in. One gets the impression that the editors have had to work around a disparate collection of conference papers and have tried valiantly to shape them into a book. It may all add up to new military history but only in the sense that it contains no traditional military history at all. Almost all essays concentrate on the period 1870-1920, the date 1800 in the title being justified only by one paper on the coalitions of 1792-1815 as seen through the diary of a Hungarian noble officer. The other fourteen topics covered include drill, discipline, and the mistreatment of soldiers between 1868 and 1914; Polish and Ukrainian female legionaries in the army during the First World War; the cor-

respondence of Heinrich von Srbik and two fellow historians during that war; the theater life of imperial officers as prisoners of war; military service in the Slovene lands; the demilitarization of the Croat military border in its Hungarian context between 1868 and 1881; Trent as a fortress and garrison town; antimilitary protests and behavior in Czech society until 1918; the Joseph Radetzky cult in Cisleithania between 1848 and 1914; images of the Turks before and during the First World War; Austrian war memorials during the interwar years; the voyage round the world of the "Archduke Friedrich" between 1874 and 1876; questions in the Reichstag over military suicides from 1907 to 1914; and the care of invalids during the First World War.

However eclectic, many of these topics are interesting even to a historian of the old school. Inevitably they vary in quality but I can comment on some of them. Scheutz, for example, provides a well-documented account of the correspondence between three historians during World War One, one of whom had been rejected for military service on health grounds; one of whom was a regular soldier; and one (Srbik) who had been deemed too valuable to serve in the army, although he fought as an artillery officer during his university leave each summer. The tensions that arose between these close friends are well enough brought out, but whether they tell us anything of general importance about the war, the army, or wartime society may well be doubted. Scheutz could have made something of the fact that these three historians never actually discussed the war as a political or historic event. Srbik, we are told, at first expected it to be short and over by sometime in 1915 at the latest. But that is all any of these historians wrote about it. Why did it break out? Was Austria-Hungary justified in its policy? What would defeat or victory mean for the monarchy? Why did these men fail to discuss these issues? Scheutz does not investigate these questions. Do we conclude that good historians in the monarchy were just supposed to accept whatever fate the kaiser prepared for them? On the one hand, such *Kaisertreue* (loyalty to the emperor) would be remarkable, although it would certainly constitute a sad reflection, if true, on the intellectual condition of the monarchy in 1914. On the other hand, it would be a firm rebuttal to those who argue that the monarchy was losing intellectual support by then.

It is difficult to know what to make of Cole's essay on the Radetzky cult. He has clearly gone to a lot of trouble digging out details regarding various statues, songs, and poems about the field marshal. No doubt his industry is to be recommended, although in the end it is difficult to

know exactly what he has proven. Cole starts by asserting that it is important for the new military history to examine the cults of military heroes in order to understand the part played by these in the “process of militarization and the spread of the cult of the military in European society” (p. 243). Then, having decided that the Habsburg Monarchy had very few military heroes, he picks on Radetzky as the only real modern one, before eventually concluding that his cult had no real influence at all save nostalgia. This might have been guessed. After all, all the fuss made over the Duke of Marlborough, Admiral Horatio Nelson, and the Duke of Wellington, not to mention lesser Victorian luminaries, hardly turned Great Britain into a militaristic society. And the recent memorials to Sir Arthur Harris and Bomber Command are hardly likely to make today’s Britons militarists either. If societies are not already militaristic, statues are not likely to change anything. In the case of Radetzky’s statues, as in the case of those of Britain’s military heroes, they represented, and still represent, gratitude for success in war—not the threat of a military takeover. Cole, by the way, makes a lot of fuss about Radetzky’s reputation in Bohemia. This is perhaps forgivable given that the field marshal was born there and had a Czech name. However, he spent only a modest part of his life in Bohemia, did not speak Czech, and always considered himself a German. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Czechs had and have other national heroes. Radetzky always represented the monarchy, never Bohemia.

Finally, there are a few details that Cole gets wrong. For example, it was General Count Langenau, the former Saxon chief of staff, who Prince Karl Schwarzenberg chose to make the initial dispositions at Leipzig. (Langenau supposedly had local knowledge and knew how Napoleon’s mind worked as a former officer in Napoleon’s army.) I would also like to have seen evidence that confirmed that the army supplier and businessman Joseph Gottfried Pargfrieder paid off Radetzky’s debts. This is often assumed and may well have been the case but is there proof positive? Cole does not footnote his assertion. Finally, he fails to get the context of the Vienna statue right when he suggests that its erection was somehow officially inspired to counter growing nationalist sentiment in the monarchy. The statue in fact was one of a series erected in Vienna, whose great military monuments went up in two waves. The first statue (unveiled in 1863) was devoted to the memory of Archduke Charles, followed by statues of Prince Eugene (1865) and Schwarzenberg (1867). The second cycle began with the memorial to Admiral Wilhelm von Teget-

thoff (1886), then came the statue of the Empress Maria Theresa (1888)—her most famous generals and advisors were also given statues—while Radetzky’s turn came only later in 1892. Seven years later, the Archduke Albrecht, who died in 1895, got his own statue.

The final erection of Radetzky’s statue came through popular pressure. It seemed incomprehensible that Tegetthof should get a statue in 1886, while Radetzky who had died thirteen years before him did not. Pressure then built up into a press campaign that started at the time of the Novara celebrations in 1886. Donations began to be collected for the still unannounced project and the campaign was headed by Field Marshal Graf Folliot-Crenneville, the general adjutant to the emperor. Archduke Albrecht grew worried and wrote to Franz Joseph advising immediate action since “otherwise each day” might bring “surprises of ... an unwelcome nature.”[1] He estimated that a statue would cost sixty-five thousand gulden and in 1886 the first committee was set up to raise funds. By November 1886, over two hundred thousand gulden had been collected with many contributing their “sechserls” and kreuzers. There was then a debate over where to put the statue. Vienna offered five sites and the one at Am Hof opposite the old war ministry was chosen. Eventually the statue was unveiled on the neutral day of the imperial wedding anniversary in 1892 rather than on the anniversary of one of Radetzky’s battles. This was so as not to upset the Italians, now Austria-Hungary’s allies. Then, when a new war ministry was created on the Stubbering in 1912, Radetzky’s statue was moved as well. There it was overshadowed by the new building. At Am Hof he had overshadowed the old ones.

The monarchy did not serve Radetzky’s memory well, despite his record. It was very slow to build his statue in Vienna and did so under popular pressure; it never arranged for the Kriegsarchiv to publish an official biography or even to publish his official correspondence. Compare this with Prussia’s treatment of Helmuth von Moltke. Cole fails to understand how shabby the official stance actually was. Otherwise what he has to say is a long, well-footnoted exposition of the fairly obvious point that Radetzky’s statues reflected nostalgia for the good old days.

Compared to Cole’s, the essay by Oswald Überegger on Austrian war memorials between the wars is highly sophisticated. The author rightly points out that most writing on war memorials in Austria has concentrated on the Second World War, Nazism, and the Holocaust, and has been dominated by political and social scientists,

whereas only a few historians have devoted themselves recently to the cultural aspects of First World War memorials and memories. He then presents his own contribution, based on memorials in North and East Tyrol, as one of preliminary conclusions. He sensibly states that war memorials can be overvalued as media of memory and can give rise to false interpretations. He even questions whether war memorials reflect how the dead were remembered afterward. Perhaps they represent political, economic, or other motives and hence obscure rather than illuminate the process of memory. An analysis in several stages is therefore needed to avoid a reductionist view of them and to avoid running the risk of automatically placing these memorials at the center of the field of memory. Überegger sees little value, for example, in the iconographic study of memorials, since they often arose from accidental local factors and over time became stereotyped and standardized. Often they became symbols for political use—to stabilize society, or to promote patriotism or other values—all so that those whose blood had been shed would not have died in vain. Later on there were attempts to sacralize them. Yet this kind of thing obscured the fact that at the end of the war, in Tyrol as in other parts of the monarchy, there had been a huge reaction against war and armies. Military associations had felt the need to dissolve themselves, and it took years before villages and towns could bear thinking about war memorials. More relevant was the brutalization that the war had brought about. As one person wrote to a newspaper on the cult of the dead in Tyrol in 1921: “You now all praise the poor dead, who would have been happy to remain in their Alps or in their workplaces, instead of today receiving a stone as dead heroes” (p. 310). Überegger’s study is an excellent piece of work.

Hämmerle’s essay on drill, discipline, and the mistreatment of soldiers in the period 1868-1914 assumes that no one else has ever been interested in such subjects. Yet in the book I wrote on Radetzky’s army, I covered all aspects of army life as it affected ordinary soldiers as well as officers and paid full attention to drill, punishments, and mistreatment. If the author had only consulted it, she could have made all sorts of judgments about continuities and discontinuities respecting army practices in the long nineteenth century, ostensibly the period covered by this collection. As it is, she establishes that after the *Ausgleich* attempts were made regularly to soften regulations regarding punishment with the use of the cane being abolished in 1869 (the practice of “running the gauntlet” had already been abolished in 1855). That is not to say that corporal punishment completely disap-

peared since two forms of binding the limbs of soldiers together in padlocks and leaving them in painful positions for hours on end remained in force (the worse form was abolished in 1902 but the lesser form survived and was used extensively in World War One). Common soldiers received the right to complain if they felt that they had suffered unjustly, albeit only after punishment had been inflicted. Meanwhile, the army regularly informed its officers that its aim was to win the hearts and minds of its troops and that any punishment should be inflicted with tact and understanding. Moreover, none should spring from personal animosity. These punishments were now expanded to include ones that impinged on the morale of the men rather than on their bodies: time outside the barracks could be cut; their pay could be cut too; they could be assigned boring, degrading, or physically demanding tasks; or promotions and medals might be withheld. Having explained all this, Hämmerle goes on to examine how harsh discipline was in practice. Was punishment used simply against genuine offenders or was it used, as before 1867, as *the* means of training the army and holding it together?

By examining the punishment records of individual soldiers, on the one hand, she discovers that not only was corporal punishment used regularly but punishments also were handed out frequently for the most trivial offenses and that many soldiers during their three years in the ranks were punished up to thirty times. On the other hand, her reaction to the language used by non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and officers toward soldiers betrays a certain naïveté, and in the end, given the lack of any comparative data, she does not succeed in persuading the reader that army life in Austria-Hungary was harsher than anywhere else. All armies, after all, have the job of breaking down new recruits and transforming them into obedient soldiers, a job that cannot be accomplished sensitively. Certainly she cites no cases of men being driven to suicide and shooting officers before shooting themselves, something that was not uncommon in the 1840s.

Here exactly is the rub. Her silence on this matter (suicide is only mentioned, almost *en passant*, in one quotation from one memoir) is quite bizarre, since suicide, in fact, was a huge problem for the Austrian army and forms the subject of a separate essay in this collection by Hannes Leidingner. In 1894, according to a Berlin newspaper, out of every 100,000 troops, 125 in Austria, 63 in Germany, 43 in Italy, and fewer than 30 in England, France, and Belgium committed suicide. The Austrian army had the highest suicide rate in the world and one

that was fifteen times higher than that of ordinary Austrians! Leidinger concentrates on questions to ministers on the topic in the Austrian Reichstag, but also examines statistics and possible causes. Clearly suicide was much more prevalent among ordinary soldiers than among officers or NCOs. Thomas Masaryk and Emile Durkheim produced rather vague possible causes—modernization, alienation, etc.—but the army itself assigned the causes to punishment, fear of punishment, fear of being transferred, unwillingness to serve, and failed exams, at least as far as military factors were involved. Others included alcoholism, debts, unlucky love lives, and nervous exhaustion. Gradually, under U.S. influences, medical reasons predominated in explanations. Men involved in suicides and attempted suicides were regarded as pathologically ill. Yet a good 10 percent were still held to have been reduced to suicide on account of their mistreatment. The defense minister was frequently questioned about these cases in parliament although deputies rarely linked them with nationality problems; a few did, however, suggest that soldiers of minority nations had been so insulted by their comrades that they had been driven to take their

own lives. Publicly, the army always denied that service conditions had anything to do with the problem for which it tended to blame political and social trends. The public, therefore, was asked not to frighten young soldiers who were just about to join the army by discussing the matter and not to increase any feelings of homesickness they might have as they were leaving.

Leidinger's piece is one of the best in the book, which contains a very mixed bag of essays. There is insufficient space to cover more of them. Most readers will find something of interest in one or another. If they do not exactly cohere (why are Hämmerle's and Leidinger's not in the same section, indeed next to each other? Why do they not refer to each other?), they all in one way or another have something to say about Habsburg military history. And for that at least we can all be thankful.

Note

[1]. Quoted in Oskar Freiherr Wolf-Schneider von Arno, *Der Feldherr Radetzky* (Vienna: Verlag der Militärwissenschaftlichen Mitteilungen, 1934), 135.

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