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Review of *Forgotten Wars: Central and Eastern Europe, 1912-1916* by
Włodzimierz Borodziej and Maciej Górny

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Włodzimierz Borodziej and Maciej Górny, *Forgotten Wars: Central and Eastern Europe, 1912-1916*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. xiii + 365pp. 4 maps + 57 figures. ISBN: 978-1108938495 (hardback). Price £61.

The translation and publication of the 2015 Polish monograph about 'our war', *Nasza wojna* by Cambridge University Press is to be welcomed. The late Włodzimierz Borodziej perhaps best known for his work on the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, and his prolific co-author Maciej Górny, historian of modern Europe, have produced an intriguing and readable account of these fateful years, enlivened by the perspectives of 'ordinary' soldiers through copious use of memoirs as yet untranslated into English and a vivid use of rare photographs. The result is a humane examination of the pity, chaos, confusion, and mean contrariness of war. Its Central European outbreak in 1914 including the patriotic fervour, chanting, songs, street demonstrations and drunken riots when 'the boundary between active support for government policy and common thuggery became completely blurred' (p. 230) is sensitively discussed. Women are also not forgotten and the discussion of 'hygiene', the politics of disease and sexual encounters in occupied Warsaw and Belgrade is powerful and compassionate: 'Neither the Germans nor the Austrians were prepared to admit that it was only after their arrival in the region that some of its civilizational deficiencies emerged' (p. 347).

The focus is deliberately comparative and incorporates the historiography of the rest of Europe. Another real strength is the geographical focus on East Central and Southeast Europe from the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 to the death of Habsburg Emperor Franz Joseph in 1916, when much of the region was under the control of the Central Powers. This allows the authors to consider the position of the combatants thematically, to decentre traditional centres of power and to look at the war from those left to deal with the mess. Examples highlight their point. In Przemyśl, the besieged population endured weeks of meagre supplies and the usually well-fed officers dined on 'horse sirloin, horse tongue and and horse roast' while the local commander Hermann Kusmanek checked on how the hungry rank and file were saluting and whether military discipline was being maintained (p. 116). The town of Sandomierz was conquered and lost on several occasions over the course of three months: 'In August 1914, the Russians withdrew ... so hurriedly that they did not have time to destroy the track and bridges. This was accomplished instead by the Austrians...' (p. 249). Just weeks later Sandomierz was recaptured by the Russians who repaired the destruction, which they then destroyed before their retreat. The infrastructure was then repaired by the Austrians, and then destroyed again only to be restored by the Russians. As the authors pithily note this cycle of destruction 'provided employment and wages to locals and professionals alike'.

The book introduces some little-known contemporary texts. Sigmund Freud's disciple Sándor Ferenczi discussed the fears of men about injury and lost masculinity or the pacifist Helmut von Gerlach who attempted (unsuccessfully) to find regional patterns of violent behaviour. Included within the text are several sizeable extracts from contemporary and recent sources (such the description of 'Kakania' from Robert Musil's unfinished 1940 modernist novel series *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*). This format will probably work quite well for teaching (especially if students need to limit their book purchases) and it should also encourage the more curious to read further. General readers might be less taken with the change in font size and interruption to the flow of the text, but I particularly enjoyed reading an extract from Maciej Górny's chapter from the 2019 book *Science Embattled* about the 'lofty' 1917 *Handbuch von Polen*, written entirely from German sources and ignoring all Polish language ones. The extract from Christian Teichmann's 2002 dissertation on typhus and delousing was also well chosen.

Their premise that these conflicts have been 'forgotten' by subsequent generations is not unreasonable and this book is part of a wider movement to reclaim that history and to connect with this now departed generation. In the absence of states to prolong the memory of the conflicts, the past did disappear into a realm of personal reminiscence, family stories and hidden trauma. Without veterans' associations bringing old Habsburg or Imperial Russian combatants together and without the corresponding national ceremonies, public holidays and prominent war memorials, the deeds of heroes and antiheroes were too easily forgotten at least in the public sphere, only preserved in suitcases, or relegated to a few lines of rare memoirs. Since Borodziej and Górny's original monograph appeared, many other historians have tackled these 'forgotten' subjects and produced some superb studies. These include Jiří Hutečka on the experience of Czech soldiers, Alexander Watson on the fortress at Przemyśl, and Tamara Scheer on Habsburg volunteers, language use and national identity. While I found the prose a little fragmented at times, and often wanted (even) more detail and contextualisation especially on the Balkans, this book is certainly both readable and memorable. Jasper Tilbury's translation conveys much of the subtlety of the original. And it is a tribute to the authors that their research agenda from the last decade has been carried forward by other scholars into this decade.

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