
Book Review : “Central and Eastern Europe after the First World War”.

Edited by Burkhard Olschowsky, Piotr Juskiewicz, and Jan Rydel.
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“Central and Eastern Europe after the First World War” is an impressive book that resulted from the conference held at the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Berlin (January 31 - February 2, 2018). Edited by Burkhard Olschowsky, Piotr Juskiewicz, and Jan Rydel, this book incorporates 25 articles signed by 26 contributors from eight countries.

The Institute of European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (Warsaw) and the Federal Institute for Culture and History of the Germans in Eastern Europe (Oldenburg) are the main supporters of this book published to commemorate the moments that defined the (re)construction of Central and Eastern Europe, in the aftermath of the Great War. The topic of the volume is an extensive one, covering precisely the most important aspects of the historiographical debate:

- history of conflicts
- history of ideas
- territorial history
- economic and social history
- psychological consequences of war
- history of memory.

The **Introduction** created by the three editors of the book is a complex and logically structured synthesis in four sections. This is a real thematic incursion into the meaning of every page in this book. Contextuality is the strong point of this *Introduction*; the authors have managed to capture in an easy-to-decipher key exactly the elements that can help the reader to understand the works published in this volume. Contextuality is historiographical, geographical,

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political, journalistic, social, anthropological, economic, cultural so that the Great War and its consequences can be seen in itself.

An important subchapter of this *Introduction* is entitled "Founding States - Successes and Failures". Going through it offers the chance to understand the contextual insight of the states' building between 1918 and 1920. In the interwar period, they became the actors of European politics and were on the political, diplomatic, and military agenda of the great powers. Knowing the process of their constitution helps the reader to appreciate the broader perspective of interwar European geopolitics. Finally, this *Introduction* discusses all the major themes of the era: violence, paroxysm, revisionism, colonialism, ideologies, the Spanish influenza pandemic, modernization, emigration.

After such a complex introduction from a historical and thematic point of view, the book opens the way for the reader towards the five thematic groups of articles published by contributors.

History of Conflicts discusses *The Central European Civil War, 1918-1921* (J. Böhler), *How the Habsburg Monarchy, Austria and Hungary were drawn into the Russian October Revolution between 1917-1919* (I. Murber), *'The Red Scare' in Yugoslavia: The Hungarian Soviet Republic and the beginning of the Yugoslav anti-communism 1919-1921* (T. Lompar), *Internationalism or national separatism. The relationship between Kosice social democracy and Czechoslovakia 1918-1919* (A. Simion) and *Charades at Versailles: Poland and Ukraine at the Paris Peace Conferences* (W. Templin). In essence, these chapters highlight the fact that some conflicts have been provoked by nations in order to achieve what they could not achieve in other ways. On the other hand, the experiences of Hungarians, Yugoslavs, Czechoslovaks, Ukrainians have shown that similar ideological movements in the new states have encountered the barriers of nation-states, which have often hindered cooperation between them.

The second part of the book contains three chapters that have been grouped under the theme **History of Ideas**. In his article, B. Olschowsky compares the two competing perspectives on the principle of self-determination of nations: V.I. Lenin and W. Wilson. In the author's opinion, they "failed because of their far-reaching utopian ideas and the persistently severe social and national damage inflicted by the 'Great War'." For his part, M. Bresciani points out that "Fascism's own idea of Europe was grounded in hierarchies of nations and empires, in which fascist Italy had to play a leading role." An interesting perspective on the post-war world was illustrated by P. Juskiewicz (*Modernism and War. The idea of regeneration in European Art and Architecture after the First World War*). From this perspective, "the relationship between the First World War and modernity can also be approached not so much as an external factor of modernization, but as a crucial element of the modernization process itself."

The five chapters in the third section (*Territorial History*) present the internal processes of rebuilding the states of Central and Eastern Europe. Austria (A. Suppan) Hungary (L. Szarka), Romania (A. Dancila; M. Sălăgean) and Georgia (B. Kobakhidze) are the case studies that this section of the book depicts to the reader in order to highlight the particularities of the determinants in post-war consolidation of nations.

Similarly, the fourth section (*Economic and Social History*) provides four studies on fiscal and monetary policy during the economic transformations of Central and Eastern Europe (M. Górny and W. Borodziej), revisionism and political radicalization in Bulgaria (O. Schulz), The Belarusian Civil War, 1918-1922 (A. Zamoiski), but also about post-war transformations in Jewish politics (A. Hofmeister).

Psychological Consequences of War is the title of the fifth section of the book. The three chapters of this part deal with Slovak (M. Syrny) and Polish (J. Urbanek) society, but also the struggle of women for civil, social, and political rights in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland (K. Labowicz-Dymanus).

Finally, a key theme in completing the debate on the evolution of Central and Eastern Europe is the *History of Memory*. The case studies presented in the sixth section are those of: Poland (B. Dziewanowski-Stefanczyk), Lithuania (V. Safronovas) and Romania (F. Abraham). The narrative of each nation in the post-war period was intended to justify either a certain right to state independence, or a certain geopolitical evolution, or the evolution of the relations being built between the new states.

The volume coordinated by Burkhard Olschowsky, Piotr Juskiewicz, and Jan Rydel has a real historiographical value. Written to celebrate a century since the end of World War I, this book paves the way for a complex and interdisciplinary approach to the evolution of Central and Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the Great War. The book sets the foundation for historians to broaden their research agenda for what the first interwar decade was for Europe's political, economic, and social evolution in the twentieth century. The contribution of so many authors from numerous countries provides this volume with a special value in the recent historiography of the last century.