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# Review Of "War In Peace: Paramilitary Violence In Europe After The Great War" Edited By R. Gerwarth And J. Horne

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Review

*War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* by Gerwarth, Robert and Horne, John

Review by: Pieter M. Judson

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so did the hospital as the situation at the front deteriorated, so Elsie and her colleagues were withdrawn and repatriated to Britain on 29 February 1916.

Nevertheless, Elsie did not abandon the Serbs. Those in the Austro-Hungarian kingdom formed two divisions of volunteers. The first division was sent to the front in Dobrogea and at the request of Nicola Pašič, the Serbian Prime Minister, Elsie offered her nursing services. She travelled via Archangel to Dobrogea with seventy-five colleagues from the SWH and medical equipment, all accompanied by thirty-six Serbian officers and men who were to join their comrades. They reached their destination on 30 September. For more than a year they moved throughout the region with their field hospital, caring not only for the Serbs, but also for Romanian and Russian wounded. They remained there until the military situation dictated their withdrawal and on 25 November 1917 they reached Newcastle upon Tyne by ship from Russia. Elsie, who had developed cancer, barely survived the journey, for she passed away on the following day.

Coroban recounts the story of the Scottish Women's hospitals, and the example of Elsie Inglis, as an inspirational episode in the history of international aid. They are particularly eloquent today given the multinational presence of voluntary organizations throughout the whole of Southeast Europe.

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DENNIS DELETANT

Gerwarth, Robert and Horne, John (eds). *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*. The Greater War. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012. xii + 240 pp. Maps. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. £65.00.

THE authors in this fine volume edited by Robert Gerwarth and John Horne attempt to theorize the common characteristics of the waves of paramilitary violence that ravaged many European societies from Ireland to the Caucasus in the years following the official end of the First World War. They interpret post-war violence in broadly transnational European terms, rather than seeing it as a product of specific national crises or of Eastern pathologies. At the same time, the editors and authors view this violence as a distinctive phenomenon that cannot simply be explained as a general by-product of the recent war. Rejecting the notion that the First World War had so brutalized the combatants that they often wreaked violence against each other and against civilians when they returned home, the editors seek their explanations in the power vacuums produced by the collapse of state monopolies on violence. This

they relate to a larger phenomenon that other historians have referred to as a 'culture of defeat'. This culture of defeat might as easily be termed a 'culture of desperation' that mobilized non-state paramilitary actors to beat back a threat of Bolshevism in the unstable years following the war's end.

With the exception of the Soviet Union itself, however, Bolshevism posed little threat to European societies. Nevertheless, this volume makes clear how much the mere notion of a threat from the Communist Left inspired some returning soldiers — frequently officers — and many youths who had missed the action of the war, to brutalize their fellow citizens. That some post-war governments failed to guarantee social stability in 1919 allowed these fighters to legitimize their vicious treatment of anyone deemed dangerous to the existing class structure or to national survival. Moreover, as Gerwarth and Horne point out, the replacement of empires by self-styled nation states after 1918 motivated paramilitary squads to neutralize what they perceived to be threats to their nation posed by local linguistic or religious minorities as well. Both the Wilsonian moment that proclaimed ethnic nationhood to be the measure of statehood, as well as the looming threat of Communism, justified the usurpation of force from a legitimate but ineffectual military. Crucially, paramilitary ideology came to view leftists and minority ethnic groups as seamlessly interchangeable parts of a single terrible enemy.

The organizations that perpetrated this violence differed considerably in character. In Central Europe (Austria, Germany, Hungary, Italy and northern Yugoslavia), paramilitary squads consisted largely of returning officers joined by younger men who had missed the war and were eager to prove their mettle by intensifying the quality of violence they meted out to civilians. Most of their victims had little to do either with Bolshevism or with nationalist enemies. Many were Jews, or locals against whom they bore a grudge. Further East, however, in the Baltics, in the Ukraine and in the USSR, paramilitary squads more often consisted of peasant recruits — sometimes returning veterans — who organized to protect their locality from marauding Bolshevik, White Russian or German armies. In these latter cases, ideology was hardly a motivating factor compared to the demands of basic survival. In fact, as Tomas Balkelis argues for the new Baltic states, the paramilitary organizations of the immediate post-war period were even meant to function as schools for the nation, educating the nationally indifferent inhabitants about their putative national identities. In the Balkans (Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Kosovo), in Anatolia and in the Caucasus, paramilitary organizations were rooted in pre-war conflicts, such as the expulsion of Muslims from Ottoman Europe in 1908–13. Paramilitary squads served nationalist agendas by carrying out horrendous wartime and post-war projects of ethnic cleansing, without implicating official militaries. These paramilitary organizations continued to flourish in some

multi-ethnic regions, where states simply could not impose stability, until the 1930s. This was not, as the editors and authors are quick to point out, a product of Balkan pathologies, but rather of the specific ways in which nationalist projects had engaged with the decline of Ottoman state power.

Finally, two essays analyse paramilitary violence at the other end of the continent in Ireland, and Horne offers an instructive analysis of paramilitary activism in France in the 1920s. The French counter-example demonstrates that despite the presence of several factors similar to those at play in Central and Eastern Europe, the state's successful monopoly of violence marginalized disruptive groups. Nevertheless, Horne cautions that the very presence of these factors kept the possibility of an explosion at some later date alive, were the state ever to lose control.

The quality of the individual essays is for the most part high, and a majority of the essays engages productively with each other, particularly those by the editors, and those on Russia, Italy, the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire.

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PIETER M. JUDSON

Read, Christopher. *War and Revolution in Russia, 1914–22: The Collapse of Tsarism and the Establishment of Soviet Power*. European History in Perspective. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke and New York, 2013. 249 pp. Maps. Select Bibliography. Index. £20.99 (paperback).

DRAWING on a prominent career interpreting twentieth-century Russian social, political and cultural history, Christopher Read has produced an intelligent, compact yet remarkably comprehensive, hard-hitting, up-to-date synthesis on the Russian Revolution that examines the period from the Great War to 1922. In asking how and why the Bolsheviks survived the ordeal, Read considers the kaleidoscope of revolutions that rocked Russia during this time. The text can be used with confidence in courses on modern European and Russian history as well as in those on war and revolution.

Beginning with an engaging background chapter on Russia as it entered the twentieth century, the book comprises nine chapters and a conclusion. The volume differs from Read's *From Tsar to Soviets: The Russian People and Their Revolution, 1917–21* (Oxford, 1996) in three respects. First, in keeping with contemporary scholarship, the author places the Revolution within the context of World War One and broader European and global processes, but he does so without diminishing the importance of the Revolution. Read acknowledges that, without war, 'the revolution as we know it would not have taken place', yet