

John W. Mason. *The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1867-1918*. London & New York: Longman, 1997. Second edition. Pp. xiii, 126. Paper, \$12.15; ISBN 0-528-29466-5.

Albeit significant, traditionally Central Europe has been a rather complicated region for students and others less well informed to comprehend historically and in the present. Moreover, since the era of *glasnost* and the fall of the Soviet Empire this complexity has seemingly intensified. A similar situation existed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially with regard to the demise of the then once-great empires still overlaying the region—German, Russian, Turkish, and Austro-Hungarian.

In the second edition of *The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1867-1918*, John W. Mason, a retired lecturer in history at Bournville College of Further Education in Birmingham, England, attempts to clarify the complexity of this earlier era in Central Europe with the hope of providing some insight into more current circumstances. As he correctly observes in the opening lines of the Forward, "The Austro-Hungarian Empire is one of the great lost causes of modern European history. Yet, lost causes have perhaps as much to tell us as successes in history." This new edition references several new sources and examples of the post-1985 scholarship in the field. It also contains more documents in Part Five, now eighteen pages worth, and a new map at the beginning.

In addition to the final documents section, this succinct volume is divided into four other informative parts—historical background, domestic affairs, foreign affairs, and assessments. The first part very briefly traces the development of the Empire from the origins of the Habsburg Monarchy through 1848 and the imperial union—*Ausgleich*—of Austria and Hungary in 1867. The second part underscores the Empire's failure to adjust to modernization, nationalism, and democracy. Czech-German problems in the 1880s and 1890s, the parliamentary government established in the 1890s, Austro-Hungarian problems in the 1900s, and South Slav problems (e.g., Bosnia) all are highlighted.

The third part takes the reader into late imperial foreign affairs through the First World War—the final strain on the dying Austro-Hungarian Empire and Russian and Turkish empires as well. Like these other two ailing states, the Dual Monarchy somewhat recklessly chose war in 1914 to offset the above cited and other internal problems. Part Four then provides a short interpretive summary. Beyond the concluding documents, which are both interesting and helpful, this book contains an extensive and well-organized bibliography, but comprised mostly of secondary sources.

While this volume is clearly intended as a primer on the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire for relative neophytes and is quite successful in what it sets out to do, in the process it nevertheless offers some informative distillations of late Habsburg

history. Within these stated parameters, for example, the explanation of Austro-Hungarian multinationalism (concerning eleven nationalities) is excellent. Thus, this book might also prove a refreshing summary briefing for those better versed in Central European affairs as well.

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David G. Herrmann. *The Arming of Europe and the Making of the First World War.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997. Pp. ix, 307. Paper \$16.95; ISBN 0-6910-1595-3.

Even a freshman student of European history can make a list of crises that led up to World War I, including the two Moroccan confrontations, the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Balkan Wars. To read the Table of Contents in David Herrmann's new book one might think that he had done no more than trace this familiar pattern as so many have in the past. Herrmann has, however, done much more. Studies of the outbreak of World War I have focused on the political and diplomatic maneuvering in the capitals of the major powers. This is certainly an appropriate focus, but Herrmann has added an important factor that has been underplayed in the past--military policy.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a time of enormous and competitive technical innovation for soldiers. In hindsight, the most important changes were in artillery, but for the soldier of the day that was not so clear. Machine guns, neutral colored uniforms, and a variety of other changes were sweeping through the Great Powers. Increasing the numbers under arms and providing proper training and equipment also had to be considered. Herrmann does an excellent job of tracing these technical changes in all of the Powers and some of the lesser states such as Italy. In this the volume is fairly traditional military history. What makes the book unusual and deserving of the honors it has won (including the American Historical Association's 1996 Paul Birdsall Prize) is Herrmann's account of how military advisers influenced political decisions. In clear, effective prose, Herrmann shows that in each of the crises leading up to July 1914, a significant factor in decision making was the generals' evaluation of military preparedness and the likelihood of success in war. In the final chapter, he suggests that by July 1914 German commander Helmuth von Moltke and his staff had concluded that militarily the situation was likely to worsen for Germany over the next few years. The other Powers were engaged in expansion and modernization that soon would reduce the German advantages in training, technology, and manpower. Russia was particularly a concern. In those other Powers the military staffs tended to believe that war was virtually inevitable in the foreseeable future and that their military improvements were far enough along to make success in an armed