
In the past two decades, the evolution of World War I historiography has been dynamic and distinct in its accomplishments. In contrast to this general development, Serbian historiography has largely remained outside this new wave of international scholarship. However, it now seems that external factors are helping alter this situation. The 2007, the English translation of Andrej Mitović’s classical work *Serbia’s Great War* (1984) laid the foundations for new historiographical developments, including the 2008 publication of *La Serbie. Du Martyre à la victoire 1914–1918* by French historian Frédéric Le Moal. Following this trend is the recent work on Serbia’s Great War by Jonathan E. Gumz, entitled *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914–1918.* Gumz’s analysis of the Habsburg occupation of Serbia during the Great War focuses on the ideology that guided Austro-Hungarian military elites. If the first two works can be regarded as a synthesis of older interpretations, Gumz’s book moves even further by reinterpreting the Habsburg occupation of Serbia, taking into account the neglected but complicated ideology of the Austro-Hungarian military elites during their occupation of Serbia from 1916 to 1918.

In the first chapter, “Facing a Serb Army en Masse: The Habsburg Army and War on Civilians in 1914,” Gumz analyzes the Habsburg military’s perception of the war with Serbia, stressing the military’s frustration with the unconventional approach to the conflict, and especially with the experience of substantial civilian participation on the Serbian front. The images of soldiers wearing civilian’s clothes, female fighters, and tortured, captured Habsburg soldiers haunted the belligerents. Gumz offers a new interpretation of the mass executions of the Serbian civilians by the Habsburg military in the first days of the invasion in 1914. His explanation takes into consideration the Habsburg ideas of the *war zone*, namely that the Austro-Hungarian army leadership held that armed civilians had no reason to be in areas of military engagement. With this, Gumz avoids reinforcing older interpretations that cite the anti-Serbian sentiments of Austrian elites.

Gumz also offers a more nuanced explanation as to why Austro-Hungarian soldiers practiced appalling acts of retaliation in August of 1914. The author analyzes the conduct of the attackers in the broader context of Habsburg military education as well as in the European-wide conflict. Unfortunately, Gumz’s analysis of the first major clashes between the Serb and Habsburg armies is too focused on the role of Serbian guerrillas or auxiliary troops, known both as *Komitadjis* or *Chetniks*, which in fact played only a minor part in the fighting, mostly acting as reconnaissance units. As a result, the reader is given the impression that the Austro-Hungarian armies were defeated not by the regular Serbian divisions but by a few guerrilla formations.

Gumz thus indirectly opens the important question of Serbian guerrilla fighters. Serbian High Command controlled these troops and considered them legal. However, bearing in mind the German experiences with the *Francs-tireurs* in 1870 and subsequent international debates about the rules of war, the use of soldiers in civilian clothes presented a highly controversial issue in 1914. The Serbian victory of August 17-19, 1914 occurred because Serbian regular army formations were equipped with the latest models of French artillery and comprised of soldiers and officers with previous experience gained during the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. In other words, the Habsburg army’s obsession with the *Komitadjis* was more psychological rather than strictly military.
In the second chapter, “Eradicating National Politics in Occupied Serbia,” Gumz evaluates the mentality of elites of the Austro-Hungarian army. The overwhelming majority of political and party struggles in Serbia stunned Habsburg elites when they took over Serbia in 1916, especially since their fundamental mission during the war had been to destroy subversive political activities and the institution of an _anational_ devotion to Habsburg laws and identity. Here, Gumz offers a valuable, in-depth analysis of the reports of the Austro-Hungarian intelligence officers, particularly those concerned with the daily life of the civilian population. These sources are filled with fascinating discussions on politics and the war among clergy and public servants at numerous restaurants. These insights are critical to highlighting civilian activities under occupation and the Austro-Hungarian military’s perception of the Serbian population.

The third chapter, “Legal Severity, International Law, and the Tottering Empire in Occupied Serbia,” addresses the culture of violence during the Habsburg occupation. Gumz confronts the standard “ethnic hatred” arguments advocated by multiple generations of Serbian historians. This explanation posits that Habsburg military commanders had a premeditated desire to reduce the biological strength of Serbia’s population, and that this motive was veiled by official military rationale. Gumz points out that the severity of occupation, as manifested in mass executions and internment of civilians, was mainly fueled by the ideas of legality, obedience, and just treatment in accordance with the bureaucratic-absolutist ideology of the pre-1848 period that survived within the Habsburg army into 1918. Much of this chapter focuses on the internment policies that led to a paradoxical situation when Habsburg officials sent approximately 70,000 Serbian civilians to prison camps, which actually undermined food production, thereby eliminating any sympathy that may have still existed among the local population. As in the previous chapter, Gumz discusses Habsburg perceptions of Serbian society, this time about Serbian conceptualizations of law and order.

The following chapter, “Food as Salvation: Food Supply, the Monarchy, and Serbia, 1916–1918” discusses the issue of food supply as an aspect of “total war.” In 1916, Serbia was at the brink of famine. Still, with the help of international relief agencies and as the distance from the front line increased, a modicum of stability reinvigorated agricultural production. Serbia survived the famine and by the end of 1916 the food production rose. This meant that Habsburg military came under greater pressure to export livestock to the parts of Habsburg Empire that were starving. Gumz approaches the issue of supply provision as an integral part of internal Habsburg relations. Specifically, he argues that the food produced in Serbia was, in the minds of the military officials, produced in a military zone, and therefore requests made by civilians had no priority during wartime, regardless of need. The author also points out that international considerations played a significant role in the decision to either starve or to support the civil population in Serbia, thus arguing that for high-ranking Austro-Hungarian officers destroying a whole country through food deprivation was not considered a legitimate weapon of war, despite the usage of such measures by some of the other belligerent states.

“A _Levée en Masse_ Nation No More? Guerilla War in Habsburg Serbia” analyzes Serbian guerilla resistance, mainly in the Toplica area. The author again points out nuances in the behavior of the resistance, and emphasizes the various ways in which Serbian civilians dealt with Habsburg occupation. Still, the Bulgarian army was heavily involved in the destruction of the Toplica uprising, and Gumz could have dedicated more space to a discussion of the effects of the Bulgarian army’s brutality in the areas of Serbia controlled by the Habsburgs. In the final chapter, “The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914–1918,” Gumz presents an excellent example of the “war and society” approach. This historiographical tendency