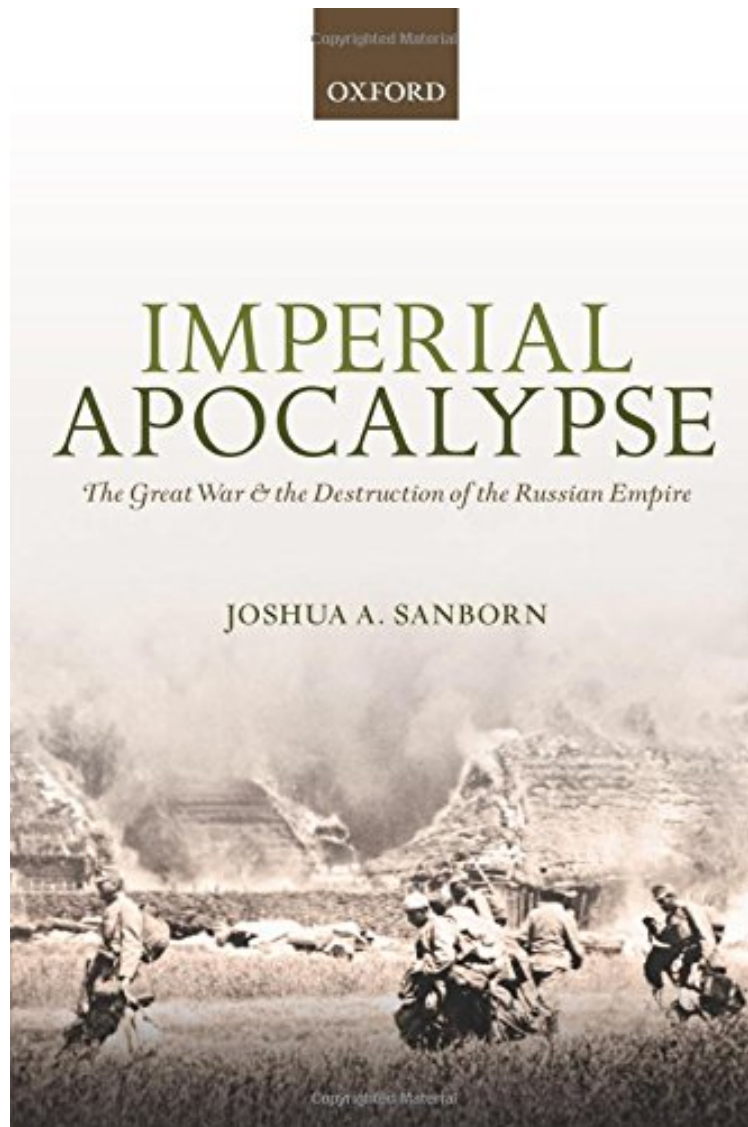


(Get free) Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire (The Greater War)

Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire (The Greater War)

Joshua A. Sanborn

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Joshua A. Sanborn : **Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire (The Greater War)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire (The Greater War):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great Research on World War I Imperial Destruction, but the Main

Argument of Decolonization Falls Flat
By B.C. Booth
Joshua Sanborn's *Imperial Apocalypse* is centered around World War I and the collapse of the Russian Empire. In this monograph, Sanborn attempts to accomplish two goals: to describe the lives of those on the World War I Russian front, and to study the way that the Russian Empire was "decolonized" (vii). *Imperial Apocalypse* is something of a hybrid of methodologies through its integration of military history with social and political history. Sanborn criticizes other authors for neglecting to identify the attributes of decolonization apparent in World War I, as well as for the lack of importance that has been placed on the Eastern front by English-speaking historians (vii, 3). The primary argument presented by Sanborn is that World War I was a war about European decolonization, and that the nation-states that emerged in Eastern Europe after the war should be categorized as postcolonial. According to Sanborn, decolonization occurs in four stages: Imperial Challenge, State Failure, Social Disaster, and State-Building (5-7). Imperial Challenge occurs when social movements gain the capacity to challenge the legitimacy and authority of the Imperial government. Sanborn provides an example of this through descriptions of the lives of nurses, doctors, firemen and POWs on the front during the Great Retreat of 1917, who were able to step "into the gap left by the inability of the government and military" (155). State Failure, the second phase of decolonization, is thoroughly developed by Sanborn. This failure is effectively described through his portrayal of the rise of the 1917 Russian Revolution: "Urban women had begun the revolution, and socialist activists had maintained and extended it, but the decisive moments came with the revolt of the garrisons on the streets of Petrograd and the quiet coup at Stavka. The Romanov dynasty had survived three centuries thanks in part to its ability to effectively control its armed forces. The war destroyed the bond between army and monarch. When revolution came, the withdrawal of military support for the throne brought the whole system crashing down." (193) In this passage, Sanborn describes how wartime events begin to undermine the traditional state, leading to its collapse. The third phase of decolonization is Social Disaster, which materializes when the fabrics of civilized society become torn and unrecognizable. Sanborn illustrates this most effectively through his description of the complete disregard of soldiers for civilian authority and norms. Many soldiers became publicly intoxicated and resorted to vulgar acts of theft, rape, and murder (174-75). State-Building, which is the final phase of decolonization, is merely glossed over because, as Sanborn states, it "deserves its own separate study" (258). Despite effectively demonstrating his first three phases of decolonization, Sanborn neglects to ever define the term "decolonization". The reader is left wondering precisely how the phases described relate to his main objective: to make the case that the rise of nation-states in Europe is a product of decolonization.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This goes beyond most accounts of Russia's defeat and revolution ...
By william mathews
This goes beyond most accounts of Russia's defeat and revolution in 1917. Using notions of a failed state and a collapse of colonial empire, Sanborn shows that the defeat of the army joined an interrelated demise of civil society as retreat led to refugees flooding to the rear, call ups of recruits and labor led to protests, food shortages and inflation led to economic chaos and there was no stopping it in the war. One can only wonder how the Tsar and his entourage talked themselves into this demise, a repeat in many respects of 1905.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Military defeat and social chaos and its consequences in Eastern Europe and Russia. Depressing but a very interesting read.
By lyndonbrecht
This is an intriguing book. Sanborn writes well, and theorizes in this book that the destruction of the Russian empire represents a kind of decolonialization akin to that of the British or French empires later in the century. One difference of course is that the Russian empire was continental and the colonial areas adjacent to the colonizing state (in 1914 Russian colonized areas included most or all of what is now Finland, Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic nations, and a number of states in the Caucasus and Central Asia). I am not entirely convinced that the theory is important, but this is nonetheless a quite good read. A weakness is that the print is dense and not easy on the eyes, and the maps could be more useful--and no illustrations. The lack of illustrations is a bit of an issue because some of the places and events he discusses are not commonly covered in histories on this subject, such as the Muslim rebellion in Central Asia or the large numbers of forced laborers. Stresses and strains produced during the war built up and resulted in the social explosions of 1917 and 1918. Among these were defeats at the hands of Germany, large numbers of prisoners (3 million Russians taken prisoner, and they took 2 million Germans and Austrians), poor leadership, martial law behind the front and in occupied areas that can only be described as brutal, inflation, widespread disgust at the Imperial family, quite heavy casualties, malnutrition (and starvation), and political ineptness at the center. The book is quite good at discussing all of these, although some are mentioned in passing. The book also integrates all this with the ebb and flow of war, although not in great detail. Among other interesting detail is that Sanborn says a number of new social groups came into being. These include POWs (both sides took large numbers of prisoners and in camps these created a kind of society, plus POWs forced to work in industry or agriculture created new relationships with the enemy), refugees (on a very large scale), forced labor, camaraderie in military units and military medical personnel. One chapter looks at the medical personnel, well worth the read, as I have not seen it covered in detail anywhere else. Sanborn describes in some detail areas of near chaos and other important issues. Russian occupation of Austrian Galicia for example was characterized by the Russian assumption that Ukrainians were simply another variety of Russian, and the occupation attempted to force the population to speak Russian, to convert to Russian Orthodoxy (many were Uniate, essentially still Orthodox but agreeing with the Pope in Rome). Russian insensitivity created huge issues. The sections through the book that

discuss chaos in areas are depressing--lynching of people with German names, extensive pogroms against Jews, quite large populations forced to migrate (that is, Russians forcing populations to migrate deeper into Russia), robbery, rape and murder rather widespread and gangs of deserters turning to crime. The society was in some ways disintegrating, which is the book's point.

Imperial Apocalypse describes the collapse of the Russian Empire during World War One. Drawing material from nine different archives and hundreds of published sources, this study ties together state failure, military violence, and decolonization in a single story. Joshua Sanborn excavates the individual lives of soldiers, doctors, nurses, politicians, and civilians caught up in the global conflict along the way, creating a narrative that is both humane and conceptually rich. The volume opens by laying out the theoretical relationship between state failure, social collapse, and decolonization, and then moves chronologically from the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 through the fierce battles and massive human dislocations of 1914-16 to the final collapse of the empire in the midst of revolution in 1917-18. Imperial Apocalypse is the first major study which treats the demise of the Russian Empire as part of the twentieth-century phenomenon of modern decolonization, and provides a readable account of military activity and political change throughout this turbulent period of war and revolution. Sanborn argues that the sudden rise of groups seeking national self-determination in the borderlands of the empire was the consequence of state failure, not its cause. At the same time, he shows how the destruction of state institutions and the spread of violence from the front to the rear led to a collapse of traditional social bonds and the emergence of a new, more dangerous, and more militant political atmosphere.

"Sanborn's command of his vast primary source base lends his narrative authority, his prose is unfailingly engaging, and his insights numerous. The many personal stories he tells of humble citizens caught up in this imperial 'apocalypse' provide moving illustrations of the broad processes he charts. Above all, no previous treatment of Russia's Great War and revolution makes so palpable the scale of chaos and misery endured by the population as war-induced violence spun out of anyone's control."--Journal of Modern History"[Sanborn] succeeds brilliantly in integrating the military and social history of Russia's war effort... An outstanding contribution to the spate of books marking the centenary of the Great War." --CHOICE"Sanborn's book is thus at once an everyday life history of the Russian Front, a gripping narrative of the key battles in which the Russian Empire participated, and a sophisticated conceptual argument about the stages of decolonization during the First World War." -- The Russian About the Author Joshua A. Sanborn is Professor of History at Lafayette College. He is the author of two previous books: Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905-1925 and, with co-author Annette Timm, Gender, Sex, and the Shaping of Modern Europe: A History from the French Revolution to the Present Day. He lives in Easton, Pennsylvania, with his wife and two children.