

Ross Anderson. *The Forgotten Front: The East African Campaign 1914–1918.*

Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing, 2004. Distributed by Trafalgar Square Publishing, P. O. Box 257, Howe Hill Road, North Pomfret, Vt. 05053. 352 pp. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. \$45.00. Cloth.

In *The Forgotten Front*, Ross Anderson has produced the definitive history of the First World War's East African campaign. This is the story of how roughly ten thousand Germans and their African soldiers tied down several hundred thousand British and allied forces for the entire four years of the conflict. It is also the story of how the supposedly "civilized" colonial powers drew tens of thousands of African soldiers and laborers into a war that did not concern them and spread disease, famine, and devastation throughout what is now modern Tanzania. To date, there is no other English-language monograph that covers the East African fighting in its entirety. Although the British government's official history of the first two years of the campaign appeared in 1941, World War II delayed the remaining volumes permanently. Hubert Moyse-Bartlett's *King's African Rifles* (1956) and the German commander Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck's autobiography (English translation, *East African Campaigns* [1957]) cover World War I in East Africa from the British and German perspectives but provide only a narrow view of the overall conflict. Anderson, a veteran of the British and Canadian armies and the holder of a Ph.D. in history from the University of Glasgow, aims to remedy this historical gap by covering the "fighting and operational aspects" of the entire campaign. He also correctly widens the scope of his narrative beyond the British and German forces to consider the Belgian and Portuguese role in the East African war.

Anderson's book is an old-style narrative military history. His primary actors are politicians, generals, and divisions. Based on material from British and German archives, *The Forgotten Front* consists of chronological chapters that take the reader through the strategic background of the war in 1914 to the end of the fighting four years later. Although Anderson's close attention to precise troop movements reads in places like an account of a chess match, there is much to recommend this book. A particularly startling revelation is his convincing argument that the East African campaign began in 1914 when General Sir E. G. Barrow, the military secretary to the India Office, took it upon himself to redefine Britain's strategic objectives from the straightforward occupation of German naval bases to territorial conquest. In other words, the tragic decision to extend the First World War to East Africa was made by a relatively insignificant British military official.

It is unfortunate, however, that Anderson did not follow John Keegan's alternative template for military history laid out in his brilliant *Six Armies at Normandy*. Where Keegan uses the organization and performance of armies to draw conclusions about the societies that produced them, Anderson is largely silent on the origins of the primary combatants in East Africa. He

argues correctly that although the campaign was globally insignificant, it had enormous local consequences in East Africa. Yet his narrative omits the perspective of African soldiers and civilians. New African military units seem to appear out of thin air without any discussion of European recruiting practices or their consequences for specific African communities. Moreover, Anderson often adopts the perspective and language of his European sources. Thus we are told that the East African colonial forces' primary peacetime mission included "preventing the depredations of marauding nomads" and that the British recruited their African soldiers from "traditional, favored tribes" (22).

In fairness, Anderson did not set out to write a social history of the East African campaign. He acknowledges the absence of African voices from his narrative and declares: "Silence must not be confused with a lack of importance and the African contribution to the campaign was absolutely essential, if far from fully explained" (11). Nevertheless, Anderson could have given his study a more nuanced local dimension by making better use of the fairly comprehensive literature on African experiences in the First World War. While *The Forgotten Front* will probably find its main readership among military history buffs, its primary value to most historians of East Africa working on this period will be as a reference work. Anderson's thorough review of the primary military and colonial archives in Britain and Germany will help scholars situate their research in a broader political and strategic context. In essence, he has done our homework for us.

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Glenn E. Perry. *The History of Egypt*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2004. The Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations. xxiii + 184 pp. Timeline. Glossary. Bibliographic Essay. Index. \$45.00. Cloth.

Typical of the Greenwood series on "modern nations," this work begins with a chapter on current conditions, followed by the country's known history. In the case of Egypt, it takes the reader back to the fourth millennium B.C. and beyond. With a timeline of significant events, an epilogue, a listing of important people, a glossary, and a lengthy bibliographic essay, only 144 pages of text remain on Egypt, written by Glenn Perry, a political scientist.

While this reviewer lacks the expertise to critique the specific content of the chapter on ancient Egypt, it appears to be, like the subsequent chapter on the classical period through the French invasion, a flurry of leaders, dynasties, and invasions without a theoretical engine to drive the narrative. Most of the significant information on pre-Islamic Egypt would have been better placed within the section on the Islamic period or in explanatory footnotes. The specialist will find these chapters mundane, while the