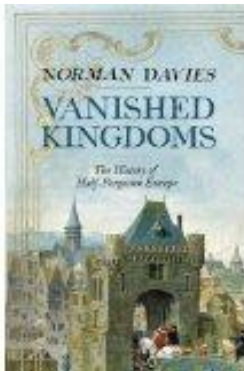


“Vanished Kingdoms”

A Review by Rob Morgan

The history of half-forgotten Europe, written by Norman Davies and published by Allen Lane in October 2011. ISBN 978-1-84614-338-0.
UK price £30. \$31.89 on Amazon.

The collapse of the USSR brought old and new countries to surface or re-surface from the depths of history. Ukraine, Belarus, and Latvia, as examples, historical entities, forgotten yet traceable. This book however, deals with the creation, failure and fall of a number of states, nations and empires which in some cases looked firm, and well-based. Aragon, a lovely medieval state, and Savoy, similarly in Italy seemed destined to thrive and prosper, and Burgundy, until the smashing defeats at the hands of the Swiss pikes in the 1470's looked a safe bet for a powerful state long term. There are a host of countries considered here. For example, Byzantium, the cornerstone of European civilisation for a thousand years, and Polish-Lithuania which once stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea.



Big but doomed.

Others examined in this fascinating selection of tales include the Kingdom of Galicia which barely existed at all, and Carpatho-Ukraine, its capital city Khunzt, flowered and died in March 1939, with three regimes in 36 hours, Czech on day one, a republic on day two then Hungarian after that!

These are remarkable stories, and not suggested here in this brief review note as good historical reading for a dark winter night, which it is, but as a source to be plundered for wargames purposes. If this book had been around when I was younger, then my Ruritania might well have been Tolosa (originally, the Visigoth kingdom north of the Pyrenees), or Rosenau the ridiculous micro-state of the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. I'm glad to say that the author doesn't get too embroiled in the gaudy buffoon puppets made up by Bonaparte's fleeting- if bloody- joke of an empire...., though there's a wargames set up there too!

This is a book filled with historical, not fantasy, wargames potential. Some wonderful names for Kings, Dukes and sundry other leaders too. I'm not keen on the triple barrelled stuff like the Germanic Kings of England, but who could resist Count Wilfred the Hairy? His Regiment of Hussars must surely perform well in action?