

**[Review of the book *The Jews of Vienna and the First World War; Reconstructing a National Identity: The Jews of Habsburg Austria during World War I*]**

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tice. Not surprisingly, it was scorned both by Catholics such as the emperor's court preacher, Martin Eisengrein, and the more zealous gnesio-Lutherans who were drifting into Lower Austria. Maximilian's critics savagely attacked his court, which they claimed was full of religious half-breeds who belonged neither to Rome nor Wittenberg nor Geneva.

This well-written biography is a mature and judicious work of history, a product of a long and distinguished career devoted to the early modern Habsburgs. Fichtner has brought together archival evidence from collections in Spain, Germany, the Czech Republic, and Austria in compiling this portrait of Maximilian. She has uncovered some marvelous passages from the emperor's correspondence that reveal the man behind the office. Upon hearing rumors of his sister-in-law's marital infidelity, Maximilian lashed out against her with a memorable barb: "Would that the bitch were stuffed in a sack and nowhere to be found" (p. 130). At the same time Fichtner effectively synthesizes a substantial body of secondary literature. While never losing the reader in an overly technical discussion, she presents an excellent overview of the nuts and bolts of running an empire. Her work in Vienna's Hofkammerarchiv is reflected in the lucid survey of the financial challenges Maximilian faced when assuming the throne. In an equally clear fashion, she lays out the often perplexingly complicated imperial bureaucracy the emperor struggled to master.

My only reservation, and this equivocal at best, concerns the metaphor of failure that frames the biography. Fichtner is in part reacting to a revisionist literature that has argued that the Empire was politically more robust and healthier than both its contemporary and later critics allowed. This study of Maximilian is certainly a timely reminder "that imperial governance had seriously dysfunctional features, beginning with uncertainty over the locus and extent of the emperor's authority" (p. 223). But still we should not forget that Maximilian's reign was part of a surprisingly long period of peace within the Empire. Though disliked by many, the 1555 compromise settlement at Augsburg held for sixty-three years. Maximilian, to be sure, was often passive and ineffective, but the confessional violence of the Low Countries and France did not spill over into central Europe, and at times the emperor's intervention actually did work, as a new study by Jason Lavery reminds us in the case of the Baltic (*Germany's Northern Challenge* [Boston, 2002]). Ultimately, it was not the muddling of Maximilian but the firm and decisive leadership of Ferdinand II that would lead to war. This point aside, Paula Fichtner has produced a well-balanced and accessible study that should remain the standard for many years to come.

HOWARD LOUTHAN

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**The Jews of Vienna and the First World War.** By *David Rechter*.

London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001. Pp. xiii + 218. \$45.00.

**Reconstructing a National Identity: The Jews of Habsburg Austria during World War I.** By *Marsha L. Rozenblit*. Studies in Jewish History. Edited by *Jehuda Reinharz*.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pp. xiv + 257. \$49.95.

These two titles seek to explain how World War I and the collapse of Austria-Hungary affected Jews living in the multinational Habsburg state. They bring together two well-developed fields that have heretofore spoken past one another: the history of Jews in

imperial Austria and the political and cultural history of World War I. Appearing at the same time and with ostensibly similar topics, the books are in fact quite different in scope and source base. David Rechter has produced a history of Jewish politics in one city using the writings of community leaders, while Marsha Rozenblit casts a wider net, using elite and popular accounts by Austrian Jews to show how they understood their Austrianness and their Jewishness in wartime.

Rechter has written a tightly focused study of the contours of Jewish Vienna from the perspective of its main political camps—the liberals, nationalists, and Orthodox. Although the book focuses on Vienna, from it we learn a great deal about Austrian Jewry more generally, in part because Galicia physically came to Vienna in the form of over one hundred thousand wartime refugees. The wartime encounters Rechter documents between the refugees and native Viennese Jews reinforce the findings of other historians in the field: a cultural, religious, and linguistic east-west divide existed among Habsburg Jews. The story throughout the war is one of the community failing to achieve unity. Thus, the seemingly straightforward title of Rechter's book, *The Jews of Vienna*, conceals within it an ambiguity that is one of the significant findings of the study: there was little agreement on who these Jews were. He finds "no Jewish consensus as to what exactly Jews were—a nation, an ethnic group, a religious community, or some combination of these" (p. 9).

Staunch dynastic patriotism was one point on which Viennese Jews across the political spectrum did agree. Rechter notes that loyalty to Austria was "often the only common denominator to the most disparate and mutually hostile Jewish points of view" (p. 23). An eloquent writer, Rechter often finds just the right turn of phrase; he describes this consensus on Austria as "wall-to-wall Jewish patriotism" (p. 25). While Jews remained *kaisertreu* throughout the war, we learn that the kaisers did not always remain *judentreu*. In 1914, when the Galician Jewish refugees first arrived in Vienna, Franz Joseph made a point of extending support to them. Rechter notes that state authorities saw in refugee welfare work an opportunity to promote Austrian patriotism; such work could showcase the peoples of the empire aiding each other as Austrians. But wartime censorship policies also showed a state ambivalence about combating antisemitism. From early 1915, antisemitic articles began to circulate more freely, while Jewish responses were censored. By 1918, daily antisemitic rambles in the press went uncensored, suggesting that authorities of the state no longer had the will (or ability) to protect its most loyal subjects.

In well-ordered chapters on refugee welfare work, youth organizations, and the attempts to create an Austrian Jewish Congress, Rechter's study deftly outlines the liberal, nationalist, and Orthodox Jewish leaders' political strategies. The nationalists, whether Zionists or supporters of diaspora nationalism, projected "a vocal and unambiguously Jewish point of view," while the other two groups stuck to "their generally reactive mode of politics" (p. 31). One of the great strengths of Rechter's approach is that we see the complex arguments about the Jews' place in society hashed out in the minute dealings of city politics. This approach has drawbacks, however. By focusing on these men and their home-front political maneuverings, Rechter neglects other segments of "the Jews of Vienna." The book's cover photograph shows Jewish soldiers in Vienna attending services in the Stadtempel in 1915. Who were these men? Did four years of military service change their views of what it meant to be Jewish and/or Austrian? How did they relate to their fellow Jews who spent the war on the home front? While we hear about the return of soldiers in 1918 and the extraordinary role they played in creating a Jewish militia, "one part of probably the most extensive and impressive network of armed Jewish self-defence in European Jewish history" (p. 178),

we learn nothing of the wartime experiences of Viennese Jewish soldiers. A growing historiography exists on men's combat experiences in World War I and the estrangement that developed between soldiers and home-front men. Attention to these topics might have offered Rechter yet another vantage point from which to examine fragmentation among Viennese Jews.

The book's second blind spot concerns women. With the exception of a paragraph on women and charity, and passing references to the welfare work of the Zionist Anitta Müller, Jewish Vienna seems to consist solely of men. This is a strange oversight in a book whose setting is the wartime home front. Rechter writes, "Welfare, in fact, was the sole public Jewish arena in which women were expected to participate and permitted to lead" (p. 85). But this work was not the only public realm in which women mattered. The author notes both that Viennese antisemites "found a new lease on life" with the arrival of the wartime refugees and that the refugees comprised mostly "women, children, and the elderly" (p. 93). Pursuing this connection between women and antisemitism during the war years—women as the victims and also as perpetrators of antisemitism—would have distinguished Rechter's study from several other works on Habsburg Jewry that have similarly neglected women as historical actors.

In a final chapter, "A Jewish Revolution," Rechter addresses postwar alignments in Jewish politics. Jews were a minority everywhere in the postwar successor states. Nationalists wanted recognition of the Jews as a national minority within these states, while liberals feared that the recognition of Jewish nationality (also favored by antisemites) would lead to restrictive quotas on Jewish participation in education and public life. Following a brief period of nationalist ascendancy, Rechter concludes, the liberals reasserted "the vigor and relevance of their integrationist philosophy" and remained a viable force into the 1930s. Jewish liberalism, he argues, made the transition from empire to republic more successfully than Austrian liberalism in general. This plausible conclusion fits awkwardly, however, with the concept of a "Jewish revolution" after 1918. Rechter defines the revolution (quoting Jonathan Frankel) as "the proliferation of rival power centers, movements, and ideologies" (p. 13). One gathers from Rechter's book the strong sense that such a proliferation already existed before and during the war and was in fact a defining feature of Jewish politics at that time.

Marsha Rozenblit's more wide-ranging book traces the experiences of Austrian Jews during World War I and through the transition from empire to postwar successor states. She examines this transition through the lens of identity. Her model of "tripartite identity" comprises three categories: state loyalty, cultural affiliation, and ethnic belonging. Jews in Habsburg Austria saw themselves as "Austrian by political loyalty, German (or Czech or Polish) by cultural affiliation, and Jewish in an ethnic sense" (p. 4). The demise of the multinational Habsburg state created a "grave crisis of identity" (p. 4) for Jews because, in the fiercely nationalistic postwar period, the new nation-states did not allow for the Jews' multiple identities. While "identity" has become an academic buzzword in recent years, Rozenblit's book is an identity study of the very best kind. She uses her tripartite model to make sense of the Jews' complicated place in Habsburg society; through it, she orders the landscape of multiple loyalties in East-Central Europe, a terrain notoriously difficult to navigate even for scholars in the field. As the possibility of tripartite loyalties broke down in 1918, Rozenblit succinctly outlines in an epilogue how Jews fared in postwar Austria, Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. Her book is a major contribution to Habsburg historiography.

Rozenblit's book stands to have great crossover appeal for students and scholars of Jewish history who are more familiar with the nation-state cases of Western Europe. The first chapter juxtaposes Austrian Jews, who were part of a dominant culture but

not a dominant nation, with Jews in Germany and France, who felt a stronger need “to insist that they fully belonged to the national communities whose culture they had adopted” (p. 23). Scholars teaching courses on nationalism in modern Europe ought to consider the book for their syllabi; despite the phrase “national identity” in its title, it is a case study of group identity that is precisely *not* national, but a hybrid of patriotic, cultural, and ethnic-religious affiliation.

In chapters 2 through 4, Rozenblit demonstrates that Jews saw World War I simultaneously as an Austrian war and a Jewish war. Thus, the tripartite identity did not mean a fragmented identity. Mobilizing for war allowed Jews to mobilize all of their loyalties: their love of their protector, the Habsburg state; their belief in their cultural superiority over Austria’s enemies; and their conviction that they were fighting for Jews everywhere. This last claim—that Jews saw World War I as a Jewish war—is a difficult one to prove, and Rozenblit succeeds on this point only in chapter 3, “Mobilizing the Home Front.” Here she demonstrates how Austrianness and Jewishness were simultaneously reinforced through war relief work. Initially intending to serve all Austrians, regardless of religion, Jewish charity workers ended up devoting “most of their patriotic war work to the needs of fellow Jews” (p. 59). This was due to the high number of Jews among the hundreds of thousands of war refugees from Galicia and Bukovina who ended up primarily in Bohemia, Moravia, and Vienna. Unlike local antisemites who considered the eastern refugees “foreigners,” the local Jews spoke of them as fellow Austrians suffering as a result of actions by Austria’s enemy. Highlighting women’s central roles in wartime charity work, Rozenblit demonstrates that they, too, wove together Austrian patriotism and Jewish solidarity.

She is less successful in chapters 2 and 4 in convincing the reader that Jewish men “regarded the war as a Jewish holy war” (p. 44). Rozenblit claims that Jews cared only about the war against Russia and Romania, historic persecutors of Jews; “the rest of the fighting war held absolutely no interest for the Jews” (p. 53). But there is insufficient evidence to support this contention. Rozenblit would have us believe that even those fighting on the Italian front cared little about Italy and saw Russian perfidy as the only true justification for Jewish sacrifice and death. Noting that Jewish soldiers in Italy never mention Italy in their letters, she concludes that “all Habsburg Jews . . . focused on the war with Russia” (p. 83). In these chapters, Rozenblit overstates the Jewish component of the tripartite identity.

Rozenblit’s source base is diverse. While she relies on archival materials and the Jewish press, she also offers close readings of Jewish memoirs, many of them published long after World War I. These memoirs, whose limitations she acknowledges, allow her to convey important aspects of men’s and women’s everyday experiences in wartime. They provide a useful balance to the wartime Jewish press, which, like most reporting of the time, was marked by the boosterism of home-front armchair patriots. To rebut claims that Jews were shirking military service and profiteering at home in a time of acute shortage, the Jewish press celebrated the heroic feats of Jews in battle. Jewish hero chronicles refuted the claims of antisemites, but they likely served a function within the Jewish community as well. By focusing on Jewish glory at the front, these stories deflected attention away from long-standing political and religious differences among Jews at home. Here Rozenblit’s other types of sources remind us that univocality of Jewish sentiment was a fiction of war journalism.

Rozenblit has understandably chosen to omit from this study Jews who did not operate within the tripartite model, including socialists and those who “had no interest in Jewish ethnicity at all or were only nominally Jewish” (p. 38). In a book about identity, the phrase “nominally Jewish” raises an interesting question: should historians

count as Jews persons who did not self-identify as Jews? This work very carefully and sensitively reconstructs what it meant to be Jewish and Austrian in the time of World War I, yet the analysis is founded upon unspoken assumptions about Jewish identity from the late twentieth century. The historian and reader might implicitly agree that those persons bracketed out of the study are still Jews after all. Retroactively studying the identity of persons who are preselected as having such an identity is a challenge not just for Rozenblit but also for other Habsburg historians seeking to understand the development of “Czech,” “German,” or other identities in Central Europe. In fact, it is a challenge for any historian writing about the past through the prism of identity.

Rechter and Rozenblit are in agreement that the transition from multinational to successor states narrowed the political landscape for Jews. Rechter notes that postwar Austria was “rather less amenable to pluralistic identities” (p. 164), and Rozenblit concurs: “The new nation-states defined the national community in ethno-national terms and demanded a kind of loyalty that proved difficult for the Jews” (p. 163). While it is commonly understood that the arrangement of Habsburg Central Europe was good for the Jews, and that antisemitism was a central feature of the postwar political culture of the region, each of these authors has written the years 1914 to 1918 back into the story. This is a very valuable contribution. They allow us to see World War I not just as a prelude to World War II and the Holocaust but also as a time of significant change in Jewish communal politics and Jewish identity.

MAUREEN HEALY

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**Seeing Red: Hungarian Intellectuals in Exile and the Challenge of Communism.**

By *Lee Congdon*.

DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001. Pp. xii + 223. \$40.00.

In this concise and engaging monograph, Lee Congdon tells the story of the engagement of the exiled Hungarian intellectual Left with communism. In so doing, he offers a significant contribution to our understanding of Hungarian and, indeed, European and North American intellectual history. Congdon concentrates largely on figures who are internationally known; Alexander Korda, Arthur Koestler, Imre Lakatos, István Mészáros, Karl Polányi, Michael Polányi, and Tibor Szamuely are among those whose intellectual trajectories are substantially discussed.

Congdon begins his account with the upheavals that accompanied the end of the First World War in Europe—upheavals that particularly affected Hungary as a result of the so-called Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution of 1918 and the subsequent creation of the Soviet Republic in 1919. It was the suppression of Béla Kun’s republic that created a substantial body of Hungarian left-wing émigrés, who were both collectively and individually to make an outstanding contribution to the intellectual life of interwar Europe. Congdon traces this and the following generations of Hungarian émigrés, relating their development to the political turbulence that shook the country during the Second World War, the institutionalization of Stalinist dictatorship that accompanied the onset of the cold war, and then the revolution of 1956. His account ends not with the end of socialist dictatorship in Hungary at the end of the 1980s but, rather, with the waning of the influence of these intellectual émigrés between the end of the 1970s and the middle of the 1990s.

Congdon’s purpose is to provide a collective political biography of the Hungarian