

Healy, Maureen: *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire. Total War and Everyday Life in World War I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004. ISBN: 0-521-83124-5; 333 Seiten

Rezensiert von: Belinda Davis

Rutgers University, New Brunswick NJ, Department of History

Recent years have offered studies of numerous capital cities in World War I. But until now the seat of the vast Habsburg Empire has remained without its wartime historian. This is a significant lapse, Maureen Healy makes clear: Healy believes the wartime home front, and specifically Vienna, played a, even the, significant role in bringing down the empire. Neither losses on the battle front nor the death of the venerated monarch in 1916, nor even the usually identified longer-term causes were key in the regime's collapse. Rather, Healy argues, it was the discontent and concomitant disunity of Viennese civilians that brought down the empire, largely over the wartime maldistribution of food in the capital, and despite propaganda and censorship. The concern that Habsburgers, classed by gender and ethnicity, were not always where they were „supposed“ to be broke down the state's fundamental set of images. In addition, Healy argues, there was no compelling „Staatsidee“ to carry the Viennese past the failings of presiding officials. The end was a „fizzle,“ not a „bang“: no single apocalyptic moments, rather the cumulative experience of four years of a kind of unrequited sacrifice, the experience she identifies as „total war“—fording the chronological boundaries of the military war itself. If the empire was not doomed to fall even before the war, certainly officials' domestic wartime inattentions and ineptitude planted the stake in the heart of the empire. This is a bold, suggestive study that significantly advances our understanding of the empire and its dissolution, as well as of the war.

Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire is divided into two parts: „Politics and Representation“; and „State and Family.“ The first chapters, reflecting a „radical expansion of the political turf“ (p. 26), look at how food informed the „politics of sacrifice.“ Mark Corn-

wall has established the contribution of food shortages to the fall of the empire. But Healy traces these shortages to transformation of political discourse. Healy demonstrates a keen eye for anecdotes relating the „high political“ to the everyday, and revealing food's role in crossing these boundaries. Uncovering notes from the Viennese public calling Prime Minister Karl Graf von Stürgkh a „child murderer“ for his perceived refusal to attend adequately to food maldistribution, Healy observes too that news covering Stürgkh's 1916 assassination focused on what the prime minister had been eating for lunch at the moment of his attack. So caught up in their own deepening woes, some Viennese failed to take note of the assassination altogether: Stürgkh continued to receive such „hate mail“ even after his death.

These first chapters demonstrate how the maldistribution of scarce food supplies rewrote all social relations for the Viennese as between „victims“ and „victimizers.“ The state's call for the willing sacrifice (*Opferwilligkeit*) of the Viennese and other imperial civilians was reinscribed as officials' willing sacrifice of these populations. But if inimical relations were a constant, less steady were the shared identities: one's fellow victim of one moment might well appear as one's victimizer in the next. Official response was spectacularly misguided, as in the cinema reels and especially the 1916-17 war exhibition that proclaimed a transcendent and unified nation in stark contrast with Viennese reality. Censorship too was ineffectual against rumor, denunciation, and „*Weiberklatsch*,“ the means that „came to threaten the foundation of the state itself“ (S.146).

The second half of the book turns to relations among the individual, the family, and the State. Women made clear their disenchantment with the state—and their absence of a „Staatsidee,“ resulting from ambivalent laws concerning women's nationality and citizenship and their lack of unmediated relationship to the state. Healy emphasizes simultaneously the absence of unity and common identity among women, in contrast with authorities' message. Indeed it was women's ambivalent and diminished position that gave them space in which to de-

claim their views, contributing heavily to the empire's demise. Even children wound up in a position to discredit the crown's vision and legitimacy, precisely as they were so victimized by the war experience. If authorities attempted to „seduc[e]“ adults into approving of the war via the image of children (S. 226), the latter's real and profound suffering via malnutrition and attendant disease—and their sometimes frightening physiognomy as „delinquent youth“—provoked further antipathy to the war and regime. How could these pathetic specimens reflect a glorious Austrian future—or any future? Healy's final chapter addresses „homefront men and imperial paternalism“ and the paradox this presented. If seventy per cent of Viennese men were called away from the city, this still left many who could not be fit into the government's image. This was far more destructive than even the death of Franz Ferdinand. Women especially cast these men as intrinsically inimical. This in turn exacerbated the already radically inflamed sensitivity to those who did not „belong.“ It contributed powerfully to the regime's lack of legitimacy.

This is a meticulously and masterfully researched book. Healy radically recasts accounts of the empire's demise. It contributes too to the broader literature connecting the home front, total war, and the political history of the war. The book's thesis concerning the Habsburg demise may be unnecessarily forcefully stated: there is good evidence here of the importance of home-front politics, but no way to measure in the evidence provided if this cause operated to the exclusion of other, more commonly asserted causes, including on the battle front and elsewhere in the empire, in the absence of discussion outside the home front, apart from some communications with frontline soldiers. Likewise, pace Healy's assertion of a continuous spiral downward that authorities were not capable with their tools to contain, some greater attention to the specificities of change over time might have been useful. Additional specificity at various moments could have made the argument even stronger: despite Healy's own insistence on the non-unity of various „blocs“ of the population, her own presentation often offers populations—and the government

as a whole—without substantial differentiation. Suggestions in the conclusion concerning a nostalgia for an imagined past that led to postwar expulsions would have been well worth developing still further. But it is enough here still to understand the sources of this nostalgia as they developed in the wartime scarcity, creating and exacerbating the range of enmities. For this achievement as well, the book marks an important and excellent contribution.

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