

GENERAL

Adelsgruber, Paulus, Laurie Cohen, and Börries Kuzmany. *Getrennt und doch Verbunden: Grenzstädte zwischen Österreich und Russland 1772–1918*. Vienna: Böhlau, 2011. Pp. 316.

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Can the border town speak? In the census-taking, border-patrolling, electorally minded gaze of the metropole, *Grenzstädte* are sites of statistical overabundance and therefore causes of great anxieties, real and imagined. Histories of largely Jewish towns pose special problems for East Central European scholars of a reconstructionist bent, writing after unplottable multicultural demographics have been permanently altered—or, to put it more bluntly, erased. This project, funded by the Austrian government and led by Professor Andreas Kappeler (who contributes the preface) and a team of international researchers, provides a solid microhistory of late Habsburg and Romanov (mis) governance. The central focus for the study are the pairings of Brody-Radziwilo, Podwołycka-Voločisk, and Husiatyn-Gusjatin, today all located in Western Ukraine and along the Zbruch River. This thoughtfully arranged book offers a prism through which scholars of multiethnic empires can examine key issues such as infrastructural development, mobility, governmentality, protectionist commerce (both legal and illegal), formation of confessional identity, anti-Semitism, and “mental mapping” in Galicia, Volhynia, and Podolia.

The authors include a historiography of these Ukrainian-Jewish “frontiers” and imperial “contact zones” (terms used interchangeably) and the towns’ socioeconomic, demographic, religious, and cultural histories. The border towns had substantial Jewish and Ruthenian/Ukrainian populations. Brody, for which Börries Kuzmany has written a separate history, is probably the best known of those selected. In the time period, none of the towns in the study had a population exceeding 20,000 souls. The authors show how these towns were refashioned territorially by the centers after the late-eighteenth-century partitions of Poland-Lithuania. They show lasting effects of Habsburg and Romanov confessional and linguistic diversity and the emergence of regionally based identities and specialized economic roles.

The book has an impressive array of sources in English, French, German, Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian. Jewish-language sources in Yiddish or Hebrew are not used, though the incorporation of secondary literature in East European Jewish history is laudable and extensive. The sources are a balance of state and regional documents, statistics and reports, and memoir literature. Useful “ethnographic” photos and maps, historical and contemporary, are included. The coauthors detail the totalizing effects of World War I—described as “catastrophic” for the border towns and their multiethnic roles—and a final section (“Was bleibt?”) offers impressions of Western Ukraine in 2006. The final chapter is very much a European “usable past” appeal, against past Sovietization and Ukrainian ethnonationalization. These specialists on Habsburg-Romanov border interfaces effectively show how peripheries, however labeled, categorized, and therefore simplified for the optics of statecraft or self-serving purposes of electoral politics, are at base multidimensional places with recalibrated identities, mobile populations, and fluid frontiers.

If there is a point one can quibble about, it is what this finely arranged “micro” of the long nineteenth century contributes to the “macro” of Vienna Congress Europe. The authors rely heavily on state documents and do not seem to leave their region of choice. The occasional result

is a kind of strained comparative state-imperial paradigm of *Entwicklung*, as seen in the expeditions of old-fashioned geographical societies seeking European development of commerce, road building, taxation, and infrastructure. Of course, it is hard to make such banal moments of state building sexy, and the authors document a fair amount of imperial regulatory porousness from Vienna and St. Petersburg, but the *performance* of identity in marginal space (à la Stasiuk) is itself not historicized. Border towns are liminal, to put it another way, but only if one accepts the fixing of “natural” borders (as the empires once did, at the Zbruch River) in the first place. The authors have executed a scientific-geographical study, not an ornamented archaeogeographical album, but there are traces of both genres. Still, they understand that these border town geographies must account for demographic transformations during the world wars and under Communism, and that lost “multicultural” pasts of Habsburg lands need not be an archaic exercise in recovery.

No single map can entirely “fix” a place. The three authors of *Getrennt und doch Verbunden* detail the legacies of the Habsburg and Romanov empires in their microstudy of six border towns. Reconstructing the towns over 150 years, hardly a small task, the authors have meticulously researched state and regional documents in Russia, Ukraine, and Austria. The artificiality of frontiers is the book’s leitmotif, for in such contested lands, one must study not only the demographic presence, but also the “mental maps” of traders, migrants, pilgrims, smugglers, and ordinary denizens.

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Cabada, Ladislav. *Intellectuals and the Communist Idea: The Search for a New Way in Czech Lands from 1890 to 1938.* Trans. Zdeněk Benedikt. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010. Pp. 209.
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Ladislav Cabada, a professor in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, accurately notes that political science became a “new” discipline in the former Communist bloc after 1989, and that he has taken advantage of this opportunity to study this formerly frowned upon area of research. He also rightly points out, much to the chagrin of many political scientists and historians, that the two disciplines are closely related. Indeed this volume, published in Czech in 2000 and again in 2005, and now available to a wider audience in English, is his doctoral thesis that is equally at home in either discipline.

Cabada chooses the starting date 1890 because in that year the Czech Lands saw the establishment of partial general suffrage together with the rise of modern political parties around major political figures. Naturally, the ending date of 1938 marked the demise of the first Czechoslovak republic. Prior to World War I, most Czech leftists joined the Social Democratic Party, part of the Second International, which collapsed due to national issues between the various ethnic groups, especially in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. During the war, Habsburg officials completely shut down political life with censorship, the incarceration of leaders, and the military mobilization of the membership. The recovery began only in 1917 when Socialists, anarchists, and other radicals attempted to work together to form a left-wing counterweight party to the “bourgeois” parties. The Bolshevik Revolution strengthened this movement with its promises of social justice, a classless society, transformation of private property, and ending the war, which produced several unsuccessful coup attempts to establish a Socialist Czechoslovakia. However, the left-leaning parties had expelled the Communists by 1922, correctly believing that they had attempted to infiltrate and seize control of the organizations and that they were blindly taking orders from Moscow. By the fifth Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, the full