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Getrennt und doch verbunden: Grenzstädte zwischen Österreich und Russland 1772–1918. by Paulus Adelsgruber, Laurie Cohen, and Börries Kuzmany

Review by: Theodore R. Weeks

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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*Getrennt und doch verbunden: Grenzstädte zwischen Österreich und Russland 1772–1918.* By Paulus Adelsgruber, Laurie Cohen, and Börries Kuzmany. Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2011. 316 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Maps. €35.00, hard bound.

Borders are curious things, ostensibly dividing and setting off two political (cultural, economic) territories. In reality, of course, frontiers are often porous, and life on either side of the political boundary can bear striking similarities. This is true today, but it was even more true before World War I in east central Europe when the political boundaries of the Habsburg, German, and Romanov empires seldom coincided with ethnolinguistic, religious, or economic divides. The present book looks at one part of such a porous—and yet very real—border that divided the Habsburg empire from Russia, setting quite similar communities populated by (using modern terms) Ukrainians, Jews, Poles, and others off from each other. This microstudy of three pairs of small towns makes a serious contribution to our understanding of the intersections between everyday life, politics, and economy along this little-studied frontier.

This book is the result of a several-year study carried out by an Austrian research team and overseen by Professor Andreas Kappeler (who contributes a foreword). The towns selected by the team were (giving the “Austrian” city first, then the “Russian”): Brody-Radzivilov, Podwołoczyska-Voločisk, Husiatyn-Gusjatin, in Galicia, Volhynia, and Podolia, respectively. All of these were quite small: the largest among them, Brody, had a peak population of around 20,000 during this period. The other five towns seldom had populations reaching above 10,000 throughout this period. All six had in common a high percentage or even majority of Jewish inhabitants as well as a mixed urban population with Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, and Russians in evidence. Economically all six towns lived mainly from cross-border trade, both legal and illicit. These were, in short, fairly insignificant cities (except, possibly, Brody, well-known as a way station for Jewish emigrants to the west); this study aims to demonstrate that a microhistory of “unimportant” towns can also contribute to our understanding of larger issues of administration, ethnic relations, and the nature of multinational empires.

Covering nearly 150 years in the histories of six towns, even small ones, is a rather daunting task. In fact the period is not covered evenly (given the source base, that would probably have been impossible). Despite the understandable tendency toward “thicker description” for the later period, the authors have made serious efforts to describe social and economic conditions in the decades after the partitions also. The book is divided into six chapters, followed by conclusions and an epilogue (“Was bleibt?” on the basis of the authors’ trip to the region in summer 2006). The first two chapters give an overview of the towns themselves and of the border, that is, creating, regulating, and watching over the international boundary (military desertion and smuggling are also treated here). Economy and religion are the main topics of the next chapters. The religion chapter contains, besides a section on Jews and Jewish life here, interesting information about the nearby monasteries and pilgrimage sites, Pochaev and Podkamień. The final chapter covers the period of World War I, when the cities were occupied by the Russians before being retaken by Austro-Hungarian troops. This chapter amounts to an excellent case study of how the disruption of war affected the economic situation and everyday life on the periphery of the two warring empires.

The sources drawn on for this study are rich and varied. The researchers used archives in several countries from Moscow to Kiev to New York. A number of periodicals in a half-dozen languages (not, however, in Jewish languages) were used. The bibliography of published works, both primary and secondary, could well serve as the starting point for any further serious study of Ukraine/Galicia during these years.

If any aspect of this study can be criticized, it might be the authors’ modesty and apparent reluctance to make broader claims and more sweeping comparisons with other recent works. More could have been done to situate this microhistory (the authors themselves use the word) within recent historiography, especially urban history, empire studies,

and ethnic studies. Still, not everything can be done in a single book, and one must praise the achievement of these young scholars. This book will appeal to anyone interested in the history of the Russian or Habsburg empires, Ukraine, Galicia, or World War I.

THEODORE R. WEEKS

*Southern Illinois University, Carbondale*

***The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II.*** By Tara Zahra. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011. xi, 308 pp. Notes. Index. \$35.00, hard bound.

Much has been written about the population movements in Europe that began in 1939 and continued into the postwar years. Tara Zahra is the first to explore this *Völkerwanderung* as an event of continental proportions. She achieves her unprecedented range through focus on the refugees who symbolized Europe's trauma: children. Because the bulk of Europe's displaced persons landed in Germany, the book's attention tends to be on central Europe, but Zahra also deals authoritatively (and in the original languages!) with France, Poland, Spain, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, as well as the United States.

The subject leaves no other choice: the historian of displaced children must be as transnational as the agencies concerned with these children's welfare, most prominently the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). In 1945 social workers and psychologists from UNRRA began registering the hidden damage the war had wrought on the human psyche. They discovered that children across Europe had forgotten how to play. Competing strategies emerged to help them recover: "familialist" (placing them in foster families) and "collectivist" (socializing children in homes under adult supervision). Neither was entirely humanitarian. However transnational the refugee problem, nation states considered children vital to their survival and used families as well as collectives to inculcate particular ideologies.

There is no more controversial subject than who gets to define children's welfare—families, states, or psychologists—but Zahra is meticulous and scholarly, refusing to come down on any side. Still, readers may wonder where the historian herself stands. At one point Zahra ascribes a "conservative approach" to Spaniards of the 1930s who worried about the "psychological dangers of alienating Spanish children from their culture" (58). Does this mean that a "progressive" cannot try to anchor a child in a particular culture?

The "progressives" we encounter in this book are pedagogues who emphasized the "development of children's agency, creativity and freedom" (82). But there were others in this time who understood individual agency as inseparable from the nation. Here is what one progressive wrote in 1927: "The problem is whether the big peoples which have hitherto threatened the small peoples and each other will accept the principle that all nations, big and small are equally entitled to their own individualities in political organization and in culture." This was T. G. Masaryk. If Zahra has a perspective it is what Americans now call postethnic, or what central European nationalists once dubbed "nationally indifferent." This perspective was foreign to the great majority of Europeans of the interwar years, for whom nationalism was "part of the general consensus" (Eugen Weber), but given the travesties perpetrated by nation states over the last century it seems admirable: *vive le présentisme*.

The transnational history that Zahra pioneers involves a further challenge of perspective that one might call "spatial." This is the limit in vision of those who rise to a level of analysis that permits fresh generalizations. In this book Zahra opens vistas on the policies of nation states toward children, the broad international trends in psychological treatment, the contradictions of new humanitarianism, or the fate of families in the Cold War. But if one comes closer to the ground and juxtaposes the cases (using comparative rather than transnational methods), one sees instructive distinctions. Three stand out.

Contrary to the anti-totalitarian consensus of the Cold War, Zahra reminds us, the nuclear family survived in Soviet-dominated eastern Europe. Yet can one say that the family was "alive and well" (231) in postwar eastern Europe when hundreds of thousands of fa-