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INTRODUCTION

Editor's Note

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It is a pleasure to begin my tenure as Executive Editor of the *Austrian History Yearbook* with this edition, volume 57, which highlights some of the most important lessons that Habsburg history has taught us: that national formations and expressions are always contingent; that states (empires or otherwise) are not monoliths but contact zones, in Mary Louise Pratt's influential phrasing; and that this contact occurs both within a state's borders and beyond them.

As the articles in this volume show, these dynamics—which are the topic of Peter Haslinger's article on the complexity of Austro-Hungarian relations in the aftermath of the Compromise of 1867—were not exclusive to the Habsburg Empire; they were also visible before its emergence and after its collapse. Helmut Reimitz's Kann Memorial Lecture, for instance, underscores how ninth-century contacts and conflicts between the Carolingian Empire and other groups in Central Europe helped shape the region, even in its present form. A set of articles about the lands that became Czechoslovakia in 1918 underscores the formative role that this heterogeneity and contestation played in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Writing about post-1848 Slovak grammar textbooks, for example, Alexander Maxwell argues that the idea of a "Slovak language" was slow to emerge and conditioned, in part, by the ongoing presence of Czech in pedagogical structures. David Smrček shifts his attention to the Badeni crisis of 1897, discussing the role of civil society organizations in expanding political participation in Cisleithenia, while Jiří Hutečka traces how urban space in Olmütz/Olomouc around World War I became a site where such participation and contestation were uniquely visible. Cynthia Paces, meanwhile, considers the years immediately after the Great War, when emerging "de-Austrianized" Czechoslovak institutions and practices of public health were at once profoundly influenced by an influx of American progressive ideas and practices and retained key dimensions of their imperial predecessors.

If these articles highlight contact *within* the Habsburg Empire and its successor states, the forum on Habsburg-Ottoman diplomacy in the early modern period, with an introduction by Robyn Dora Radway, looks beyond the Habsburg lands. Relying on digital sources and methods from the digital humanities, the contributors to this forum—Zsuzsanna Cziráki, Nilab Saeedi, Arno Strohmeyer, Michael Vogelsberger, and Yasir Yılmaz—offer, in Radway's words, a "nuanced and complicated picture of the entangled diplomatic practices that defined and regulated the relationship between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans."

Social, political, and diplomatic history are at the core of much of this volume. Yet two contributions on the early modern period underscore the invaluable role of textual analysis in illuminating Habsburg history. Relying on descriptions of funeral celebrations, diaries of foreign envoys, periodicals, and correspondence, Václav Bůžek and Rostislav Smíšek describe traditions associated with death and dying among Central European Habsburgs, underscoring how they helped codify structures of power in the empire. Dušan Coufal's article takes this focus on close reading a step further, inaugurating a new feature in the *Yearbook*: "Primary Source in Context," where a scholarly article and primary source document appear side-by-side: in this case, Coufal's article on resistance toward the Hussites at the University of Vienna in the fifteenth century, analyzed via an exhortation to King Sigismund allegedly written by Bohemian-Austrian nobility.

The volume ends with an article that directly addresses the question I posed at the beginning of this note: what historical work like that so wonderfully displayed in this volume can teach us—and teach us

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today, in a world on fire, as Tara Zahra puts it, fraught not just with the effects of anthropogenic climate change but also with violent nationalism and xenophobia. This question is particularly pointed for scholars in the United States, where 2026 has seen mass deportations, extrajudicial arrests and killings, and an unprecedented stifling of dissent. This year, indeed, the Twin Cities, home to the Center for Austrian Studies, has experienced months of occupation by federal forces that, for those of us who study Central European history, look distressingly familiar. If hope for the future can be found in the Habsburg past, Zahra writes via her tribute to Pieter Judson (delivered, like Haslinger's article, in Vienna in July 2025, during the Central European History Convention's first meeting), it is, among other things, in the idea that "nationalism, even the kind fueling radical populist regimes around the world today, remains situational," and in the simple fact that "things can and do change."

Things are changing at the *Yearbook* as well. With this volume, we are saying a fond goodbye to long-serving assistant editors James Gresock and Tim McDonald, both of whom have defended their dissertations at the University of Minnesota. It is difficult to overstate how much James and Tim have contributed to the *Yearbook* since their arrival: they have capably steered the ship throughout a pandemic, staff transitions, and other shifts with exceptional skill and professionalism and excellent humor. We will miss them. We are also saying goodbye to book review editor Katya Motyl, whose service in this role has been exemplary, and will be continued by her counterpart, Bryan Kozik. Happily, these endings are paired with beginnings, as we welcome two new assistant editors to the *Yearbook*: University of Minnesota doctoral students Daniel Aufmann and Clare Harmon, who already played an integral role in this volume. I thank all of the *AHY* staff for their dedication to the journal, above all editors Mo Healy and Rob Nemes, whose stellar work—from sensitive edits to imaginative new features—is visible throughout this volume, and who have been invaluable colleagues as I have joined the team.

This note ends with a somber coda marking the passing, on 25 April 2026, of David Franklin Good, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Minnesota and former director (1990–1996) of the Center for Austrian Studies. David was a distinguished scholar whose research fundamentally revised understandings of the economic development of the Habsburg monarchy during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, proving that there was much more dynamism than had often been assumed. At CAS, he broadened the range of topics for lectures, conferences, and publications; found a new publisher for the Center's book series; and reorganized the *AHY*'s editorial work. He brought the same initiative, imagination, and organizational skills to his role as chair of the Department of History. All this he did with the utmost tact, sensitivity, and integrity. He will be greatly missed, even as his impact on this journal and the Center will be lasting.

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