Editor's Notes

In an age when public figures all too often reduce the past to crude and uncomplicated stereotypes on which they build dubious policy, the serious study of Central Europe offers bracing tonic, for here is a region that stubbornly defies simple categories of analysis. The sheer diversity of its languages, ethnicities, religions, and politics gives pause to even the boldest of scholars. Since its inception, the *Austrian History Yearbook* has been committed to exploring this diversity, to investigate an area that R. J. W. Evans once famously characterized as a "centripetal agglutination of bewilderingly heterogenous elements." This current issue of the *Yearbook* continues very much in that tradition. Take the issue of geography. In a thoughtful reflection on Pieter Judson's magisterial new study, *The Habsburg Empire*, Laurence Cole observes that Judson's history is one *not* written from the center, tales told from Vienna with excursions to exotic hinterlands. In like fashion, our forty-ninth edition of the *Yearbook* also resists a model of centers and peripheries. While we open this year's edition with Franz Szabo's Kann lecture, which examines the imperial regime in eighteenth-century Vienna, our other fifteen contributors generally stay away from the Austrian lands proper. Instead we learn about agrarian reformers in Carnolia, novelists of Poland, soldiers from Croatia, frustrated inhabitants along the Hungarian-Czechoslovakian frontier, antiquarians in Cracow, and a particularly subversive Slovenian artist. Indeed, one of our contributors encourages us to set aside political boundaries in favor of one set by the environment, the meandering Danube, while others explore in creative fashion supraregional territories such as Prekmurje and Slavonia.

Though our authors touch on a variety of topics, two prominent themes merit specific note. Franz Szabo sets the tone for the first with his broad and comprehensive examination of reform in the Habsburg monarchy during the reigns of Maria Theresa, Joseph II, and Leopold II. What is reform? Too often, Szabo notes, scholars have reduced the notion of enlightened absolutism in the Habsburg lands to the policies of a specific monarch. Impulses for reform, however, came as much from below as from above. They originated from a variety of constituencies, groups that often had competing if not conflicting agendas. By broadening our understanding of this dynamic and considering factions as diverse as the neo-Jansenists and more secularly minded factions, Szabo argues that we can better understand the critical debates that reshaped the Habsburg monarchy in the second half of the eighteenth century. Others in the *Yearbook* also pick up on the theme of reform. Andrej Sušjan and Stanislav Južnič offer a case study from Szabo's broader overview. They explore the contributions of the Carniolan Society for Agriculture and the Useful Arts and how its founders drew from cameralist and physiocratic principles to establish an organization dedicated to the improvement of this impoverished region in the late eighteenth century. At the other end of the chronological spectrum, Peter Haslinger examines a topic that has become for many regions today the

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principal focus of reform efforts—security. In Haslinger's case he looks back to a post–World War I era and examines problematic border issues between Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Then there is the essay of Tomasz Hen-Konarski who examines the literary figure of the Cossack in Polish-language culture. He argues persuasively that the use of the Cossack figure in literature was originally not a reference to national identity but a statement about political reform.

Our second major theme is the complicated nature of identity in Central Europe. We have an entire forum, "The Adriatic, the Alps, and the Danube," dedicated to this topic. As Rok Stergar observes, the five articles in this collection question the assumption that the Habsburg Empire was a mosaic of mutually exclusive ethnic groups. Stergar and his colleagues demonstrate how an older narrative of nationality has been replaced by a more nuanced understanding of identity that stresses contingency and situation. Several articles in the *Yearbook* emphasize the ambiguities and ironies of identity across the region. An examination of a charitable trust established in the mid-nineteenth century by the popular ban (governor) of Croatia, Josip Jelačić, illustrates the depth of dynastic loyalty in the midst of a serious political challenge to the monarchy. We can also turn to the Italian-speaking city of Fiume and its multiple identities as an enclave in the Hungarian state. Then there are institutions such as museums that scholars have often assumed were effective agents of nation-building. In his analysis of the museums of Cracow, Markian Prokopovych maintains that these institutions reflected a variety of agendas that were not always in sympathy with each other. Finally, there is the fascinating Slovenian artist Tone Kralj whose church paintings along an ethnically exposed borderland subverted a Fascist identity its authoritarian masters sought to impose on Central Europe. If reform and identity serve as the principal leitmotifs of so many essays in this volume, structurally the *Yearbook* is bracketed by two essays that take a broader view of the Habsburg world. Szabo's Kann lecture offers at one of end of the chronological spectrum a reappraisal of enlightened absolutism while at the other Laurence Cole closes the volume with a review essay of Pieter Judson's *The Habsburg Empire*. His keen observations on how the writing of Habsburg Europe has changed reflect many of the currents that flow through the individual articles of this edition of the *Yearbook* but also speak more broadly to the profession. As both Judson and Cole maintain, the study of Central Europe, the task of understanding its complexity and complications, provides valuable lessons for historians whatever their field of specialization.

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