

***Liberalism and the Habsburg Monarchy, 1861–1895.* By Jonathan Kwan. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 2013. x + 307 pp. £60.00 (hardback).**

This book is a labour of love. Jonathan Kwan marshals an impressive array of primary material on Austro-German liberalism in the Habsburg lands (this specific focus is not obvious from the title) to provide a fresh account of its history. Kwan's monograph builds on the two landmark achievements in the study of post-1848 Austro-German liberalism, Pieter M. Judson's *Exclusive Revolutionaries* from 1996 and Lothar Höbelt's *Kornblume und Kaiseradler* from 1993; yet, he emphasizes that his focus and conclusions diverge from both. Judson's and Höbelt's books demonstrate that Austro-German liberals' universal rhetoric also served as a smokescreen. It camouflaged the fact that the society they envisaged promised liberty to only a happy few, excluding those who failed to qualify for its pursuit due to their gender or language, or due to their lack of wealth and education, respectively: Slavs, women and workers in particular (Austro-German liberals liked to think of themselves as the guardians of superior culture whose blessings they would bestow on the other, less fortunate nations of the empire). Both books show that the liberal talk of disinterestedness and of the common good glossed over very concrete, tangible politics of class. Höbelt's and Judson's studies also showed that Austro-German liberalism may have been defunct and crippled by faction fights in the 1890s, but that liberals' German-nationalist successors inherited many of their key tenets as well as their techniques of grassroots mobilization.

Kwan offers a counter-narrative, shedding doubt on the smooth continuity between liberalism and German nationalism, and choosing instead to stress the differences that existed between these two strands. Kwan's book depicts Austro-German liberalism at its zenith between the February Patent of 1861 and the 1880s; his chapters are organized around the lifelines of five prominent protagonists: Moritz Kaiserfeld, Eduard Herbst, Ernst Plener, Adolph Fischhof and Heinrich Friedjung. In this group portrait of adamant centralists Adolf Fischhof, a Jewish physician originally from Buda, and Kaiserfeld, a former delegate of the Frankfurt Paulskirche and governor of Styria in the 1870s and early 1880s, stand out as exceptions because of their indulgence towards federalist solutions to the *Staats- und Reichsproblem*. Kwan succeeds admirably in supplying vivid and well-informed vignettes of Herbst's, Kaiserfeld's and Fischhof's activities (Fischhof led the academic legion in 1848 and, much to the chagrin of Archduchess Sophie, the mother of Franz Joseph, joined the '48 Corpus Christi procession with his legionnaires). Kwan's pages on Fischhof's 1878

attempt to form a multilingual, federalist-liberal platform with František Ladislav Rieger, another veteran of the Kremsier/Kroměříž constitutional committee of 1849, are among the most compelling passages of the book.

Kwan's chief objective is to rescue Austro-German liberals from oblivion, to show 'the richness, diversity, and significance of these neglected politicians.' (p. 7) Kwan is to be highly commended for his extensive work of reconstruction and his expert handling of the sources. He is certainly correct in stressing that Austro-German liberals genuinely and ardently believed in their mission to emancipate and civilize the Monarchy's citizens. They were disconcerted to see their role as arbiters of modernity challenged by adversaries whom they regarded as myopic Slavic and Magyar 'nationalists' and they canvassed the all-embracing universalism of their own Germanophone vision which welcomed assimilated new members.

It is perfectly accurate to say that Austro-German liberals were hesitant to define nationhood in terms of racial consanguinity and ethnic purity, but this observation, too, needs a richer contemporary context to be properly understood: as Maciej Janowski's and László Tarnói's works show, the same cultural model of belonging prevailed among Czech, Polish and Magyar liberal nationalists. In the constitutionalized Habsburg Monarchy, the key objective of national liberals across the board was to recruit not-yet-conscious members of the nation and to register them in the respective electoral curias: Language usage was taken to enfranchise and unite the members of one nation. Illuminating as Kwan's remarks on liberal 'universalism' are, they need a firmer grounding in the models for national reconciliation (the ostensible 'pacification through segregation' studied by Gerald Stourzh, and recently, by Börries Kuzmany) as well as in the persisting 'national indifference' of large swaths of the Monarchy's population (Tara Zahra).

Kwan refrains from squeezing his liberal politicians into a too narrow, preconceived scheme. He is at pains to show that their attitudes cannot be reduced to the advocacy of German nationalism. Yet Kwan's overall thesis that Austro-German liberals were misunderstood, that their achievements as constitutionalists and bearers of the 'state idea' were belittled by clerical and federalist detractors, ultimately fails to hold water. Kwan's liberal heroes deserve merit as architects of the 1848/49, 1861 and 1867 constitutions as well as of the 1867 declaration of civil rights (which is still in force in Austria), but they also deserve to be taken seriously in other respects, particularly when it comes to their uneasy combination of cosmopolitan rhetoric and exclusionist politics. Therefore, despite all its erudition and commitment, the book does not quite manage to steer free from Austro-German liberals' chief illusions: namely, that German *Kultur* was the civilizational and political mainstay of the Monarchy and that the acquisition of this *Kultur* by the norm addressees of the Monarchy would finally make their transformation from subjects to citizens complete.

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