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Review Article

Reevaluating the Habsburg Monarchy from Counter-Reformation to Enlightened Absolutism

The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1550-1700: An Interpretation. By R.J.W. Evans. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979. Pp. xxiii, 531. Maps, charts. \$52.50, £ 20.

Finances et absolutisme autrichien dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle. By Jean Bérenger. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, Imprimerie nationale, 1975. Pp. xx, 527. Maps, charts.

Finance and Government under Maria Theresa, 1740-1780. By P.G.M. Dickson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987. Volume I: *Society and Government*. Pp. xix, 491. Illustrations, tables. \$123.95, \$78.00 U.S. Volume II: *Finance and Credit*. Pp. xvi, 453. Illustrations. \$110.00, \$78.00 U.S.

Joseph II. Volume I: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa, 1741-1780. By Derek Beales. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987. Pp. xviii, 520. Maps, illustrations. £ 30.

During the years following the dismemberment of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918, a lingering nostalgia for the fallen empire continued to exist in the successor states of central Europe. It was, of course, not surprising that former officers in the imperial armed forces or certain bureaucrats clung to a positive vision of the state they once served. Neither was the “naive monarchism” to be encountered in the countryside from Galicia to the Tyrol all that surprising—even if it was not quite as “naive” as nationalist intellectuals might have wished.¹ But the Habsburg empire elicited little sympathy from scholars and intellectuals abroad—particularly from western historians who had been instrumental in its dismemberment in the first place.² By 1945, however, with the benefit of hindsight, these same historians came to regret

their former harsh assessments of the monarchy, and a dramatic revival of scholarly interest in the Habsburg lands set in.³

That post-war historiographical revival seems to have advanced by geometric proportion, and some areas of research—notably *fin-de-siècle* Vienna—have become a virtual industry.⁴ A discernible trend in this development over the past dozen years or so, is an increasingly strong scholarly interest in the Habsburg Monarchy *before* the French Revolution. These first three centuries of the monarchy's existence had been served in a relatively poorer fashion than the subsequent era of Habsburg decline, but, perhaps driven by the *fin-de-siècle* engine which increasingly focused on the baroque and neo-classical roots of emergent modernism, interest in this earlier period has grown steadily. The 1987 commitment of Britain's two most prestigious university presses to expensive, elaborate multi-volume editions of rather specialized studies on eighteenth-century Austria by Professors Peter Dickson of Oxford and Derek Beales of Cambridge certainly show how times have changed. Both studies are milestones in the English-language historiography of that critical era in the development of the Habsburg Monarchy known as the age of "enlightened absolutism," and both are bound to have a tremendous impact on the broader international historiography of the period. Yet both studies, voluminous and illuminating though they are, should be regarded less the final words on the subject than stimuli for further research.

Before discussing the two massive new studies, however, I should like to explain why I have paired them with two older works which have been out for over a decade: Robert Evans's *Making of the Habsburg Monarchy* and Jean Bérenger's *Finances et absolutisme autrichien*. Both of these works were very well received when they first appeared.⁵ Indeed, Tim Blanning hailed Evans's survey as "one of the most important works to be published on early modern European history in recent decades and the most important work on the Habsburg Monarchy in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to be published in any period."⁶ John Stoye suggested that the only drawback to the otherwise brilliant study of Bérenger was that "a great deal of the material is organized round the formal refutation of an idea which nobody nowadays would seriously think of defending. This Aunt Sally is that in the later seventeenth century the Habsburg government was 'absolute.'"⁷ While I would hardly take issue with the substance of these reviews, the tone of sanguine optimism about the place of these works in the general historiography seems misplaced in the light of subsequent developments. Evans's fundamental re-inter-

pretation of the rise of the Habsburg Monarchy seems to have found precious little reflection in studies since then, while Bérenger's "Aunt Sally" is obviously still alive and well.

Reluctant though one naturally is to criticize the late dean of Habsburg studies in North America, and a great and prolific historian's last published work, yet a classic case in point is Robert A. Kann and Zdeněk V. David's *Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands*. Here a willfully circumscribed and outmoded ethnocentric view of the development of central Europe under the Habsburgs speaks confidently about the absolutism of the dynasty in the seventeenth century, asserting that "the previous [sixteenth century] dualism of state power shifted drastically in the king's favour in all major branches of government."⁸ Naturally, Bérenger is conspicuously absent from the bibliography, and while Evans is approvingly listed there, his substantive contributions find little reflection in the text itself. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that if Evans and Bérenger have not had the obvious impact one might expect on such specialized studies, general textbooks of European history are even more replete with the received wisdom of an earlier time.

There is, moreover, an even more compelling reason to preface a discussion of enlightened absolutism in the Habsburg Monarchy by recalling some important research on the preceding age of the baroque confessional state. Over the past two decades there has been a remarkable convergence of the overall interpretations of "enlightened absolutism" between Marxist historians in Eastern Europe (and especially Hungary), and the "bourgeois" historians of the West. Both increasingly tend to see "enlightened absolutism" as an integral part of the struggle to overcome perceived relative underdevelopment with requisite consolidation and modernization, brought about by a crisis of the baroque confessional state, highlighted most obviously by the military and diplomatic disasters of the 1730s and 1740s.⁹ The increasing consensus which regards enlightened absolutism as a response to a series of crises therefore depends more than ever on a clearer understanding of the preceding age. My intent, therefore, is less to review the substance of the respective contributions of Evans and Bérenger in detail, but rather to highlight those points which are particularly relevant to an understanding of the ensuing age of enlightened absolutism.

In Robert Evans's *Making of the Habsburg Monarchy* we can see very clearly the growing connection between the historiographies of the East and the West, primarily because Evans so judiciously and

assiduously exploits the often obscure Czech and Hungarian literature in his interpretation, but also because he integrates so successfully social and economic developments into the broader political, confessional and cultural dynamic. His aim is to investigate the causes of the rise of the Habsburg Monarchy. In doing so he eschews the traditional military and diplomatic narrative that holds such pride of place in other accounts, but which he regards as putting "the cart before the horse." Rather, Evans's most significant contribution is the analysis of the common and distinctive culture which gradually emerged and bonded the diverse lands, which the House of Habsburg had inherited in Central Europe, together into a unified commonwealth—certainly "not a 'state' but a mildly centripetal agglutination of bewilderingly heterogeneous elements."¹⁰

An especially significant result of this effort to discover the inner forces of the evolution of a common culture is the conclusion that "conformity grew more out of consent" than imposition.¹¹ In effect, Evans substantially downgrades the impact of specific Habsburg policies, which have been the leitmotif of other analyses—either acclaimed or censured according to nationalist prejudice. Instead he sees the dynasty essentially as beneficiaries of a crisis "which rendered them indispensable." The Habsburgs themselves were ironically propelled to their successes precisely because of their feebleness not their strength. This may seem like a paradox bordering on distortion, but, as Evans has it, "only if we view the Habsburgs as masters of Central Europe's fate, rather than as its chief pawns who never had more than a limited authority to impose solutions."¹² Thus the rise of the Habsburg Monarchy transcended the mere politics of the Habsburg dynasty.

Certainly the accession of the ruling dynasty of the Austrian provinces of southern Germany to the Kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary in 1526 hardly created any new distinctive entity in Central Europe. Habsburg power, Evans observes, was "largely formal, an accident of place and genealogy," and the possibility of creating a single monarchy out of the disparate patrimony accumulated was merely a potential.¹³ In the sixteenth century it appeared as if that integration would be shaped by the two great movements of the age which also swept through Central Europe: the Renaissance and the Reformation. A relatively lax and ecumenical Catholicism and diverse, largely moderate Protestantisms found common ground in the intellectual world of Renaissance humanism, and, against the background of relative material prosperity, produced the "reasonably tolerant and uniform cultural climate" of Central European Mannerism. This proved to be a "false

dawn," for Mannerist civilization was fraught with problems and "living on borrowed time." Unable to create a successful intellectual synthesis which could provide a secure haven as confessional lines everywhere hardened, the fragile culture was rocked by the economic crisis of the price revolution. The fissures became gaps with the disastrous Turkish War of 1593-1606, which now brought "disillusion, insolvency, and disorder."¹⁴

In this atmosphere of decay the Catholic revival began to make real progress. In surveying the implementation of the Counter-Reformation in Central Europe, Evans again shows how the militant champion of the Trentine Church, Emperor Ferdinand II (1619-1637), rode the crest of a wave rather than spearheaded the movement by royal fiat. It succeeded in part because of its own internal momentum, in part because by the first quarter of the seventeenth century the common front of Provincial Estates against counter-reformation had disintegrated. If this, in turn, upset the political balance between monarch and Estates, it "was upset not so much by any centralist policies of the former as by changing relationships within the latter."¹⁵ As the upper nobility (or 'magnates') faced the commercial opportunities which emerged from the economic revolution after 1570 by making entrepreneurial adjustments and developing new techniques of estate management, its common interest with the other orders—the lesser nobles and town dwellers—faded. As inflation diminished the value of feudal rents, moreover, the relationship between lord and peasant also underwent a tremendous change. Gradually a "second serfdom" settled on the countryside, which, unlike the contractual arrangements of the Middle Ages, "was transformed into a set of hierarchically ordered relations between ruler and ruled in tightly bound and regulated local communities."¹⁶ This new magnate emphasis on hierarchy and authority led them to rejoin the Catholic Church and to proffer an alliance to the crown. Dissent was quelled and conformity forced by a system of social and intellectual controls, which were soon systematized and consolidated in the reign of Emperor Leopold I (1657-1705).

Having shown how "the framework for a new structure of power and a new set of attitudes" emerged, Evans then analyses its mechanics by a detailed examination of "the interaction between regions and central government." He shows that the acceptance of the counter-reformation confessional, political and social order varied from region to region, but in so doing the whole complex web of magnate power at the local level is laid bare. We see that even families implicated in the rebellion of 1618 made a quick recovery and "entrenched themselves

ever more firmly with the triple guarantee of latifundium, Catholic orthodoxy and fairly unswerving dynastic loyalty."¹⁷ Thus, while Ferdinand II's notorious "renewed" constitution of 1627 (*Obnovené zřízení zemské; Verneuerte Landesordnung*) appeared to give the crown a political stranglehold on paper, in practice the reverse was the case. The élite of magnates amended the document *de facto* and retained "an almost complete monopoly over senior dignities of state."¹⁸ The political consolidation of the Counter-Reformation may have left little room for local autonomies, but the main beneficiary was the aristocracy, not the crown. What is more, real political power was exercised less by the swarm of arriviste magnates that emerged from the loyal international *soldatesca* of the Thirty Years War, than for the most part still by the surviving old indigenous nobility. So, for example, the number of royal commissioners to the Bohemian Diets between 1627 and 1698 who came from old Bohemian families was 120, while the grand total for the much publicized foreign parvenues over the same period was eight.¹⁹ Naturally, the more limited the acceptance of the Counter-Reformation consensus (as in Hungary) the even more hamstrung was the central authority.

Perhaps the most important contribution of Evans's grand synthesis is to show how the consolidation of the Habsburg commonwealth "rested at least as much upon a set of attitudes as upon a set of policies."²⁰ The analysis of the Central European Baroque Counter-Reformation mentality takes up the last third of the book. Operating within the constraints of confessional orthodoxy, deference to the constituted order and a commitment to Latin, Catholic learning nevertheless revealed remarkable fecundity, erudition and flexibility in pursuit of its universalist ideals of harmony and unity. The aspirations of such thinkers are, in Evans's view, perhaps best summarized in the work of the Jesuit Athanasius Kirchner who achieved an "ingenious refraction of the Renaissance occult universe through the prism of Catholic orthodoxy just when elsewhere the presuppositions of that universe were being discarded."²¹ While such intellectual preoccupations revealed a willingness to "compromise with educated magic," no such compromise was permitted with the popular magic of the masses. Popular culture was in turn seduced, cajoled and disciplined to conform to the values of the high culture—not always with the effects intended, but with long-lasting cultural consequences embedded into the very fibre of Central European society. That achievement was cemented by Baroque art, whose gestures, attitudes and aspirations were the fullest realization of the Habsburg Counter-Reformation.

In this way, "an ordered, reasonably prosperous, culturally and politically harmonious realm" emerged in Central Europe by the early eighteenth century. Nevertheless, the consolidation remained incomplete: not all supranational loyalties could be co-opted for the Baroque Habsburg polity (ultramontanism, for example, could be a tool for dissent); while localist sentiment and pockets of Protestantism survived (again serving as foci for opposition). Much more seriously, the world did not halt its course for the Habsburgs. The Monarchy found itself in increasingly unsuccessful competition with more modern, centralized, and proto-nationalist states, whose intellectual frameworks proceeded from entirely new and different premises. Herein lay the reform impetus and also the reform programme of the eighteenth century—though, as Evans points out with some irony—"orthodoxy created unorthodoxy in its own image, and responses to the age of Baroque paradoxically perpetuated much of the Baroque's own intellectual equipment: its categories if not its content."²²

The singular inappropriateness of the term "absolutism" to describe either the political structure or the spirit of the Habsburg Monarchy in the Age of the Baroque is also the principal theme of Jean Bérenger's *Finances et absolutisme autrichien*. While Evans has argued that the evolution of a common culture marked the Habsburg lands in this period not because of "any uniform absolutism, but [because] of uniform underlying features in different parts of the Monarchy,"²³ Bérenger's narrower political and economic focus yields a far more pessimistic picture. Indeed, he is even reluctant to characterize the Habsburg polity as a monarchy, suggesting instead that it was a "diarchy," in which it was highly doubtful the emperor had even an equal share of power. Real power, he argues, rested in the hands of a powerful oligarchy of some 200 magnate families. What success the crown had enjoyed in the seventeenth century was primarily confessional, not political. The Habsburg Monarchy was little more than a loose confederation of autonomous regions dominated by Provincial Estates. At best it was united by a common sovereign, a common army and a common foreign policy.

Bérenger's analysis clearly lacks the subtle sophistication of Evans's broader interpretation, and hence is inclined to miss the political implications of social, cultural and intellectual factors. Above all, it tends to marginalize the role of the Counter-Reformation, and fails to see the common interests of the magnates themselves as a centripetal force creating an integrated community in Habsburg Central Europe. Yet this blindness to the subtler bonds of unity or elusive signs of com-

mon identity does not detract from the great merit of this study. As a specialized analysis of the nature and locus of political and economic power in the Habsburg Monarchy under Emperor Leopold I, it serves to illuminate in detail arguments often only suggested by Evans. Bérenger demonstrates at some length how the crown's legislative and executive authority was circumscribed by an administrative structure whose conciliar form gave full scope to magnates to exercise *de facto* control over the central government. What is more, because of its dynamism and solidarity the aristocratic clique was easily able to absorb all newcomers who might have served as a *noblesse de la robe*-style counterpoise. But the real heart of the book, as the title suggests, lies in the systematic investigation of the complete control of the purse strings exercised by the magnate élite.

Fiscal deficits were a chronic ill of the Habsburg Monarchy. The crown's own cameral revenues were hardly enough to cover civil expenditure and to service the debt; defence depended entirely on taxation, and the scope here was limited indeed. Bérenger is at pains to point out that though the economy was generally sluggish during 1660-1680, it was not substantially worse than elsewhere, while after 1683 it was positively buoyant. Hence the fiscal problems of the Habsburg government were not due to any unfavorable "economic conjunctures." Nor were lax or corrupt officials really a serious problem. In essence the problem was that the magnates effectively controlled the economy, and they deliberately limited the crown's revenue demands "in order to extract maximum profits from the seigneurial system for themselves."²⁴ Their overriding concern was the defence of "their immediate material interests without regard for principles ... or the public welfare."²⁵ In fact, so short-sighted were they that immediate profit was usually preferred over beneficial long-term investment. In the face of this the emperor was constantly forced "to negotiate, discuss, beg, [and] trick" in order to obtain the necessary revenues, and even then open magnate defiance and disobedience were rampant (especially in Bohemia and Styria).²⁶

The chronic Habsburg deficit is thus explainable less by economic than political arguments. The crown remained at the mercy of the magnates, and the institutions of the monarchy could produce only mediocre results because they faced fundamental structural impediments which could not be altered as long as the power of the oligarchy remained unbroken. All the elaborate plans for reform and economic progress drawn up by a host of imaginative and perspicacious cameralists were therefore mere pipe dreams completely divorced from reality.

Two hundred aristocratic families in effect enjoyed an "overwhelming preponderance" of political and economic power, and for them "systematic opposition to progress was the golden rule." As a result, Bérenger concludes, imperial authority saw no increment in any domain in this era. The numerous hesitations in Leopold's policies were consequently not due to his character or his education, but to the limitations of his form of government. In brief, "a sovereign whose legislative power is shared with Estate assemblies, whose executive power is paralyzed by the deliberations of innumerable councils, and whose financial power depends entirely on the good will of the Estates, is not an absolute sovereign, at least not without depriving the word of all meaning."²⁷

Real change came only with Maria Theresia and the crisis of the 1740s. The forty-year reign of this remarkable sovereign was acknowledged as a major watershed in the history of the Habsburg Monarchy by contemporaries, and historians ever since have followed suit. But while the Central European historiography on this period is lively, it is nonetheless filled with major gaps. The English-language literature, on the other hand, has been very slim and also largely unsatisfactory. Most suggestions for further reading geared to students who read only English have been dominated by works either too concise, too superficial or too journalistic to have great academic value. Hence the Habsburg Monarchy during the reign of Maria Theresia remains a fertile ground where much fruitful research can and needs to be done in any language—but particularly in English.

The simultaneous publication by Oxford and Cambridge of two detailed and broadly researched studies of this period is a very welcome development. By any standards P.G.M. Dickson's *Finance and Government under Maria Theresia* is certainly the more ambitious undertaking. Indeed, it is perhaps too ambitious, for it sets out to be nothing less than a systematic survey of the social, political and financial history of the monarchy from 1740 to 1780. A labor over twenty years in the making, it is a weighty and impressive achievement, and I should hasten to say at the onset that the qualifications or reservations expressed below in no way detract from my overall admiration for the accomplishment or the significance of most of its findings. Derek Beales, in turn, has undertaken what Central Europeans manifestly have failed to do for two centuries: produce the first thorough, scholarly and full study of the oft-acclaimed "revolutionary" emperor, Joseph II. The first volume reviewed here covers the same ground as Dickson, though, naturally, its biographical focus results in

a completely different approach. Here too I would like to preface any subsequent critique with a sense of gratitude for this long-overdue enterprise, which clears away many cobwebs that have obscured Joseph for so long.

While Dickson's study is divided into two volumes, in effect he has really written three distinct (though interlinked and overlapping) studies: the first addresses itself to the social background of the period; the second seeks to come to grips with the structure of government; while the third addresses questions of finance and credit. It should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with Dickson's previous work on the development of public credit in England,²⁸ that this last focus is the author's strong suit, or that the analysis would be dominated by a strong statistical emphasis. Some 140 statistical tables are employed to illustrate virtually every major argument, often offering startling revelations at a glance, and serving as invaluable reference material for any student of the period. Had Dickson done little more than disentangle these complex and often contradictory figures, he would have rendered a laudable enough service. But, particularly in the area of finance and credit, he goes well beyond that to unravel the obscure infrastructure of Habsburg fiscal politics. By contrast with this strong third section of the study, the first two are relatively less successful.

The picture of society painted by Dickson is full of riveting data, some of which confirm traditional views, some of which shake received wisdom. Demographically the monarchy was a rapidly expanding empire, growing from just over 12.5 million in 1740 to nearly 22 million in the reign of Joseph (some 3.5 million of the increase was due to the annexation of Galicia). This growth notwithstanding, the land was relatively sparsely settled, and overwhelmingly rural in character. The urban bourgeoisie was small, and could not provide the kind of capital and entrepreneurial resources needed for sustained economic expansion. Hence, "society was backward, poor, and marked by a polarization of rank and income."²⁹ The distribution of wealth was highly skewed in every social group with "a restricted number of large [land]owners, including the crown and the church ruling the economic roost."³⁰

This general sketch is studded throughout with fascinating details. Thus we find that, contrary to the accepted view that Maria Theresia rarely created new nobles,³¹ the empress granted nearly 1,500 new titles at a rate of about 36 a year (compared with the "democratic" Joseph II's 40 a year). Contrary to the common view that the Hungarian upper nobility was seduced by the lure of Vienna and frequently intermarried

with its Austro-Bohemian counterparts,³² Dickson shows that the integration of the Hungarian élite with the Austro-Bohemian one was far less advanced. The view that the Habsburg clerical establishment was a noble preserve is qualified: though episcopal sees were largely aristocratic, the numerous powerful and influential abbots of the monarchy had largely risen from the ranks. Even the smaller details are frequently illuminating. For example we find that 18.8% of the tax assessments for the province of Styria were in female names, or that five of the six top assessments for that province were clerical. Regrettably, neither coherence nor integration are salient features of this cornucopia, and, as the author admits, the exposition leaves "many loose ends."³³ Some of these problems are, of course, due to the inadequacy of the published sources: an enormous amount of archival research still needs to be done before any satisfactory synthesis can be constructed. On the other hand, Dickson's approach, while justifiably emphasizing the bewildering diversity which pertained, is unsubstantial on the nexus of the culture. Unfortunately, he seems to abdicate precisely that quest for the kind of elusive but real forces of integration that constitute one of the prime achievements of Evans's work.

These methodological problems emerge even more strikingly in the second part of the work, devoted to an analysis of Maria Theresia's government. While again suffused with invaluable data and fruitful analyses, this section is so focused on the forms and structures of power that it fails to reveal its essential dynamics. It is, for example, very helpful to have detailed personnel lists for central and provincial government which reveal that a predominantly aristocratic tone in 1740 gave way to a more professional middle-class one by the 1770s, with an aristocratic resurgence setting in at the provincial level thereafter. However, the politics of why and how, what the Italian historian, Carlo Capra, has called a marked preference for "technocrats over aristocrats" set in,³⁴ remains unclear.

There are even greater problems for the personnel of the Kingdom of Hungary. Here Dickson's usual thoroughness seems to fail him. He appears to confuse the organs of the executive branch of the Hungarian government—the Lieutenancy Council, the Hungarian Chancellery and the Treasury—with "local authority." While the leading figures in these departments were certainly parochial in their sentiments and jealously guarded the privileged status of Hungary within the Monarchy, local government was exercised at the county level (the rough equivalents of the "circles" of Austria and Bohemia), and was dominated by the locally elected deputy high sheriff (*alispán*). That the

organs of the executive branch were dominated by magnates, and local government was dominated by a vibrant and assertive gentry is, of course, well known. But this does not tell the whole story. Where we possess exhaustive personnel lists for executive departments—such as the Lieutenancy Council³⁵—an analysis of lesser officials is also important. For from all these departments a small but important stratum of radical technocrats emerged (men such as Ferenc Balassa, Anton Cothmann, Ferenc Koller or Ádám Kollár) whose critical role is only now being gradually recognized.³⁶ What is more, even in noble preserves a trend towards professionalism was spearheaded by the crown's policy of imposing professional qualification standards both at the executive and local level.³⁷

The politics behind the structures and pattern of government also remain obscure. To suggest that the institutional changes wrought by Maria Theresia were dominated by “financial and military considerations ...[and] hampered by muddle and confusion,” is at best a partial explanation. The complex interweaving of social, economic, political and intellectual problems that characterized the transformation of the Habsburg Counter-Reformation polity require the analytical net to be cast wider. In the wake of Evans we can no longer ignore the intellectual preconceptions or confessional motives behind structural changes. By failing to examine these dimensions the understanding of the dynamic of reform is bound to be skewed. For reasons of space I shall confine myself to two brief examples.

We must bear in mind that in the existential crisis of the 1740s fiscal and military deficiencies were widely understood in governing circles to be mere symptoms of a larger problem: the inadequacy of the whole Counter-Reformation political and intellectual edifice. Reform was from the beginning animated as much by a confessional concern as a fiscal and military one. Dickson describes the famous administrative reforms of 1748-1753, inspired by Friedrich Wilhelm Haugwitz, as a virtual “*coup d'état*,”³⁸ but refuses to recognize its confessional dimension.³⁹ If “the changes made were secular ones, and did not affect the spiritual or temporal structure of the Church,”⁴⁰ that was certainly not the intention of either Haugwitz or the government. I have attempted elsewhere to show in detail how integrally the Haugwitz revolution was connected with the ecclesiastical reforms around 1750,⁴¹ and to demonstrate that when it came to confrontation with the Church, Haugwitz was a hawk.⁴² Haugwitz, like many converts to Catholicism, abhorred the Baroque pieties of the Counter-Reformation and recognized their social and economic retarding features, but he took his reli-

gion very seriously indeed.⁴³ Nor is it without significance that Haugwitz's instructions for negotiating with the provincial Estates began with neither a fiscal nor administrative, but confessional mandate.⁴⁴ In 1753 the confessional dimension of the reform was suspended over Haugwitz's bitter protest, in Maria Theresia's felicitous phrase "for now, but not forever,"⁴⁵ only because the foreign minister thought it inopportune to initiate a diplomatic confrontation with the papacy.⁴⁶

Nor can the apparent confusion in government direction or the bitter "recurrent personal strife" among ministers simply be diagnosed as a "neurosis at the center of affairs."⁴⁷ The "atmosphere of often rancorous jealousy and recrimination" was caused less by the "structure and style of government"⁴⁸ than by very real ideological differences. The Haugwitz revolution represented the delayed implementation of a political agenda espoused by cameralist theorists and bureaucrats for nearly a century.⁴⁹ By the time this cameralist reform was realized in the mid-eighteenth century, a different wind was already beginning to blow from the Western Enlightenment. As a result two very distinct ideological visions emerged in response to the failure of the Counter-Reformation Monarchy: a traditional cameralist one and a more radical Enlightenment one. Charles Ingrao has shown how the dynamics of reform in the smaller German states were largely animated by the subtle dialectic between these competing conceptions.⁵⁰ In the Habsburg Monarchy this dual dynamic is even more conspicuous, and the philosophical differences were often quite explicitly articulated. Certainly the great clash between Haugwitz and his rival reformer, State Chancellor Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, was no mere personal feud, but precisely such a conflict of ideologies.⁵¹

The second volume (and third part) of Dickson's study is devoted to finance and credit, and here the importance of his contribution cannot be overstated. This section shows how crown revenues were increased, first as a result of the Haugwitz reforms, and then following adjustments in 1763, 1766 and 1772-1773. For the most part the central government had to rely "more on indirect than direct taxes by 1780, despite the doubling of both." Extensive loans and heavy taxes during the Seven Years' War "imposed severe strains on the economy and society ... [and] the ensuing burden of interest payments, in substantial part external, greatly hampered Austrian freedom of political action in the 1760s and 1770s." Beyond that, the enlarged post-war standing army proved a millstone around the neck of Habsburg society. "By 1780, Austria was clearly suffering from long-term tax exhaustion, despite the growth of wealth and population."⁵² This brief outline of

the principal developments surveyed by Dickson, of course, cannot begin to do justice to the wealth of detail—much of it new—contained in each of the ten chapters.

On the whole it may be said that Dickson tends to be more sympathetic in his judgements of the cameralist reform party than the Enlightenment one. The choice of Haugwitz and Friedrich Hatzfeld portraits to grace the dustjackets of volumes one and two respectively was perhaps a clue here. The chief economic thinker of the Enlightenment party, Count Ludwig Zinzendorf, certainly tends to come off as a much more unrealistic radical than in the only other serious analysis of his ideas ever attempted—a work which Dickson conspicuously seems not to have consulted.⁵³ Zinzendorf's main protector and Haugwitz's chief rival, state Chancellor Kaunitz, appears to be a more gullible and inconsistent economic dilettante than in my own assessment,⁵⁴ but on the whole Dickson is neither strident nor unfair. Perhaps, having stressed in the first volume that "the Estates were not the ciphers they usually appear as in the literature,"⁵⁵ the subject of Estates credit could have been discussed in greater detail. In particular, somewhat along the lines of Bérenger, an exploration of the political connection between their consent to underwrite a large bond issue in 1761 and the local government reforms of 1761-1763 would have been welcome. However, these are minor quibbles about what is without question one of the most important contributions ever made to the history of the Habsburg Monarchy in the eighteenth century. All of us who labor in that vineyard will have our views of the terrain clarified and changed by Dickson.

The contribution of Derek Beales's first volume of a projected large-scale two-volume biography of Emperor Joseph II (1780-1790) is of a different kind. The approach is rather traditional; and in some ways it harkens back to the days of nineteenth-century positivism. The strong emphasis on primary sources, many of which are quoted verbatim at great length (quotations of 200 words or more are not uncommon), make this study virtually a collection of documents. And while the bulk of these quotations are drawn from published collections, most are here rendered into English for the first time. What is more, the approach to this material is scrupulous. Beales has been known for some time as the exposé of spurious sources which had figured large in previous biographies of Joseph⁵⁶—and in particular, the best-known and widely recommended English-language biography.⁵⁷ In the case of genuine documents he has meticulously clarified important material previously known only imperfectly.⁵⁸ In this biography he

reiterates these previous contributions and also brings often archaic and obscure published material tellingly to bear. On the whole, therefore, we have a work which, whatever its limits in interpretation or analysis, will prove to be invaluable, indeed indispensable, for undergraduate instruction.

Nevertheless, this is far from saying there are no problems with the sources used by Beales, or with the manner in which they are used. Memoirs and personal correspondence, both published and unpublished, figure more prominently than mainstream political records. While such sources as the memoirs of Prince Albert of Saxe-Teschen, the correspondence of the British ambassador, Sir Robert Murray Keith, with his sisters, or the confidential gossip between Princess Eleanore Liechtenstein and her sister, Countess Leopoldine Kaunitz (*née* Öttingen-Spielberg), both social intimates of Joseph, throw interesting light on the story, they are more tangential than the mountain of material pertaining to Joseph in the Austrian State Archives. Of the four major sections of these archives, Beales has explored only the tip of the iceberg of one of them. Hence it cannot be said that his new biography of Joseph is based on any substantive new archival investigations—even though that is precisely what we desperately need. Furthermore, much of the tattle enlisted to bolster the main argument is not handled critically enough. Commentators such as the imperial chamberlain, Prince Johann Joseph Khevenhüller-Metsch, the Prussian minister, Baron Karl von Fürst und Kupferberg, the notoriously patronizing Prince Charles Joseph de Ligne, or the gullible English traveller, Nathaniel Wraxall, all extensively used by Beales, had agendas of their own which skewed their observations. On the whole it must therefore be said with regret that Beales has succeeded in his avowed aim: “This book is an attempt...not so much to fill the gap as to put something into it.”⁵⁹

In view of these methodological limitations it is not surprising that Beales tends to be stronger on Joseph’s personality than his politics. In coming to grips with the emperor’s character, most of what he suggests is very sensible indeed. Like other recent studies, Beales emphasizes the importance of Joseph’s many travels throughout the monarchy and abroad as the concrete source of many of his ideas.⁶⁰ A careful investigation of Joseph’s education reveals that it was far more traditional than is generally suggested, and that very little of the Enlightenment (especially in its mature form) found reflection in the crown prince’s curriculum. Joseph’s difficult relationship with his strong-willed mother is sympathetically analysed, and the young “co-regent’s” frus-

trations with the political parameters within which he was compelled to operate during these years are vividly portrayed. The poignant details of this lonely and driven man's two brief marriages and his search for congenial companionship, all serve to underscore the human frailties of a prince frequently presented as an inhuman utopian autocrat.

The public side of the picture, however, is less successful. First and foremost is Beales's effort to rehabilitate Joseph's tarnished reputation in the sphere of foreign policy. Here the argument follows two essentially conflicting paths. On the one hand Beales suggests that Joseph was not as stridently aggressive as he has been pictured, and that his "reputation for expansion" is overstated. What is more, responsibility for foreign policy decisions was shared with his mother and the foreign minister, Kaunitz, and hence his culpability was diluted. On the other hand, Joseph's acquisitive policy is praised because, after all, it was successful: Galicia, Bukovina and the Innviertel were all incorporated into the Habsburg Monarchy during the 1770s, in large part thanks to the emperor's persistence. Having already engaged in a lively debate with Beales on this subject elsewhere,⁶¹ I shall confine myself to the observation that Joseph's tone was often as revealing as his words. Chafing at the bit during the Polish partition crisis, the emperor anxiously wrote his brother Leopold: "we are losing time, opportunities will escape us, and we will end up *la fourche au cu* as they say."⁶² Beales has made much out of the discretely omitted passages in Joseph's published correspondence with his brother; colorful and revealing gaps such as this, however, he refuses to fill!

In exploring Joseph's domestic policies, Beales's biography suffers from three different kinds of problems. The first is the problem of outright omission. For example, Beales asserts that he "has concentrated on areas" in which Joseph "possessed significant influence" during this period.⁶³ He also admits that the one area where the emperor had a relatively free hand was in military matters. We have already noted in Dickson's work the central role of an expanded standing army not just in military but social and economic questions as well. The most hotly-debated military innovation of the whole period was the introduction of limited conscription and a Prussian-style "canton system." The debates over this issue were extraordinarily bitter and far-reaching. Yet the extent of Beales's commentary is to say that Joseph and Field Marshall Moritz Lacy "worked together for seven years" on the matter, and "after arduous battles within the army and the administration, they attained a large measure of success."⁶⁴

The origins, nature and consequences of this political battle, and Joseph's critical role in it are all passed over. Even the relevant published primary sources are not adduced,⁶⁵ and the rich military archive of Vienna (*Kriegsarchiv* section of the Austrian State Archive) is dismissed with the words: "I did not dare venture into it, lest I should never re-emerge."⁶⁶

A second problem is a contempt for received wisdom that marginalizes the accumulated insights of many scholars. A good example of this is the chapter devoted to "Josephinism"—a term coined in the nineteenth century to describe the attack on the social, economic, political and cultural position of the Catholic Church in the Habsburg Monarchy. Essentially Josephinism entailed dismantling the confessional state, its attitudes as well as its structures, so well described in all its complexity by Evans. Because the movement reached its apex during the reign of Joseph, the term "Josephinism" stuck and was applied retroactively, much as we apply the term "Carolingian" to Charlemagne's ancestors.⁶⁷ In a misguided effort to rescue Josephinism for Joseph, Beales downplays the research of what he himself calls an "army of historians," who have labored to establish that Josephinism preceded Joseph, and that it grew out of the disenchantment with the Counter-Reformation polity felt by theologians and cameralist secular reformers alike from at least the 1730s on. Instead, he manifests a curious attachment to the views of the Jesuit, Father Ferdinand Maass,⁶⁸ even though the drift of the historiography over the past three decades has been to undermine his central theses. In the event, Beales's own thesis is modest enough: Joseph's support of the reforms undertaken helped insure their success. No one in the "army of historians" who have argued that Josephinism predated Joseph would dispute the point, and its assertion hardly requires denying their other conclusions.

The final problem is Beales's failure to put often important developments in their full context. Even more than Dickson, he seems blind to the ideological battle lines which would have rendered Joseph's apparent vacillations so much more intelligible. Thus, while Beales has rendered us an immense service by clarifying and correctly dating Joseph's famous political "*rêveries*" of 1763, failure to place them in the context of the 1763 reforms of local government, the simultaneous magnate attempt to resurrect the power of the Bohemian Lieutenantcy Council, and the Council of State discussions on the baleful effects of noble privilege in Hungary, deprives it of much of its force. Many of Joseph's policies become quite clear when we see him poised unsure

between the cameralist and Enlightenment reform camps. When he entered the political arena, Kaunitz and the Enlightenment party were in the process of amending the cameralist reforms of Haugwitz. In 1765 Joseph admitted that at first he “went overboard” for the “new ideas,” but later he “came to see that [he] had accepted in five minutes what, after prolonged reflection, [he] could no longer contemplate.”⁶⁹ With some adjustments, Joseph remained a Haugwitz disciple all his life, and this is the simple explanation of his ambivalent relationship to the Enlightenment in the subsequent quarter century.

There are two minor points with which I should like to conclude my discussion of *Joseph II: In the Shadow of Maria Theresia, 1741-1780*. The bibliography seems deliberately designed to make life difficult for other scholars. The list of titles under the heading “Bibliography” is confined to primary sources, contemporary publications, and “material that I have found useful.” This is followed by a “bibliographical index” by author which lists the location in the text where full references to works “cited more than once” can be found. Works cited once are listed in the footnotes only. Works consulted but not cited are listed nowhere. The purpose of this awkward bibliographical hierarchy frankly remains a mystery to me, unless it is intended to drive home historiographical disagreements with other scholars. Where these disagreements do exist, Beales certainly does not spare the rod. The introductory bibliographical essay and particularly much of the commentary in the footnotes seems to be a running battle with other historians. Much of this sniping is animated by a supercilious carping tone, which is perhaps *de rigueur* in British academic circles, but which may be regarded, with consternation, as gratuitous stridency elsewhere. What is worse, while these critiques are sometimes justified, at other times they are often simply unfair.⁷⁰

Comprehensive though both these works therefore seem to be, and important though the gaps they fill are, it should be apparent that much work still needs to be done on the era of Enlightened Absolutism in the Habsburg Monarchy. But, as Dickson has pointed out with justice: “What is needed ... is a systematic examination of manuscript sources rather than continued reliance on the existing literature.”⁷¹ The remarkable growing interest in this complex Central European polity may result in a mushrooming historiography, but books such as those by Evans and Dickson demonstrate that as our understanding of the monarchy becomes more sophisticated, the scope of the problems needing to be investigated becomes larger and more complex as well.

NOTES

1. On the concrete, material interests that lay behind the "naive monarchism" of the peasant masses, see Roman Rosdolsky, *Die Bauernabgeordneten im konstituierenden österreichischen Reichstag 1848-1849* (Vienna, 1976), 12-13, 203-210.
2. Wilfried Fest, *Peace or Partition: The Habsburg Monarchy and British Policy, 1914-1918* (N.Y. 1978); P. Schuster, *Henry Wickham Steed und die Habsburgermonarchie* (Vienna, 1970).
3. Robert H. Keyserlingk, "The Rehabilitation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire: British Postwar Planning in the Second World War," *Hungarian Studies Review* XIII (1986), 63-74; Paul W. Schroeder, "The Status of Habsburg Studies in the United States" and Fritz Fellner, "Habsburg Studies in Europe," *Austrian History Yearbook* III (1967), Part 3, 267-310.
4. Steven Beller, "Modern Owls Fly by Night: Recent Literature on *fin-de-siècle* Vienna," *The Historical Journal* XXXI (1988), 665-683.
5. Typical for both were the positive reviews in *The American Historical Review*: Bérenger in LXXXIII (1978), 1050-1051 [by Linda Longfellow Blodgett]; Evans in LXXXV (1980), 919 [by John P. Spielman].
6. Review of Evans by T. C. W. Blanning in *History* LXV (1980), 473-474.
7. Review of Bérenger by J. W. Stoye in *History* LXIV (1979), 98.
8. Robert A. Kann and Zdeněk V. David, *The Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands, 1526-1918*, Vol. VI of *A History of East Central Europe* (Seattle and London, 1984), 103.
9. The most outstanding synthesis of this trend in Western historiography is Ernst Wangermann, *The Austrian Achievement, 1700-1800* (London, 1973). On the new approaches to enlightened absolutism in general see the seminal Helen P. Liebel, "Enlightened Despotism and the Crisis of Society in Germany," *Enlightenment Essays* I (1970), 151-168, also in German in a revised and expanded version as "Der aufgeklärte Absolutismus und die Gesellschaftskrise in Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert," in Walter Hubatsch, ed., *Absolutismus* (Darmstadt, 1973), 488-544. Typical of the trend in Marxist historiography in Eastern Europe is Domokos Kosáry, "Felvilágosult abszolútizmus—felvilágosult rendiség," *Történelmi Szemle* XIX (1976), 675-720; and Janos Barta, "A felvilágosult abszolútizmus," *Acta Universitatis Debreceniensis, Series Historica* XXIII (1976), 3-29.
10. Evans, 447.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, 95.
13. *Ibid.*, xxii-xxiii.
14. *Ibid.*, 3-40.
15. *Ibid.*, 95.
16. *Ibid.*, 89.
17. *Ibid.*, 205.
18. *Ibid.*, 211.
19. *Ibid.*, 212.
20. *Ibid.*, 308.
21. *Ibid.*, 442.
22. *Ibid.*, 450.
23. *Ibid.*, 95.
24. Bérenger, 501.
25. *Ibid.*, 149.
26. *Ibid.*, 403.
27. *Ibid.*, 500-501.
28. P. G. M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit, 1688-1756* (London, N.Y., 1967).
29. Dickson, *Finance and Government* I, 204.
30. *Ibid.*, 113.
31. C. A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire, 1790-1918* (London, 1969), 50.
32. *Ibid.*, 55; Henry Marczali, *Hungary in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1910), 115-119; Béla K. Király, *Hungary in the Late Eighteenth-Century: The Decline of Enlightened Despotism* (N.Y., London, 1969), 29.

33. Dickson, *Finance and Government* I, 204.
34. Carlo Capra, "Riforme finanziarie e mutamento istituzionale nello Stato di Milano: gli anni sessanta del secolo XVIII," *Rivista Storica Italiana* XCI (1979), 350-352, 356.
35. Győző Ember, *A M. Kir. helytartótanács ügyintézésének története, 1724-1848* (Budapest, 1940).
36. Domokos Kosáry, "Aufgeklärter Absolutismus—Aufgeklärte Ständepolitik: Zur Geschichte Ungarns im 18. Jahrhundert," *Südost-Forschungen* XXXIX (1980), 215.
37. A good example of this at the executive level is the imposition of new standards in the Treasury. Istvan Nagy, *A Magyar Kamara, 1686-1848* (Budapest, 1971), 175-180. For the general trend, and particularly for the new standards at the county level, see Andor Csizmadia, *A Magyar közigazgatás fejlődése a XVIII. századtól a tanácsrendszer létrejöttéig* (Budapest, 1976), 65-78. Note especially the "Instructio per Supremis Comitibus" of 21 November 1768.
38. Dickson, *Finance and Government* I, 222.
39. *Ibid.*, 228-229.
40. *Ibid.*, 228.
41. Franz A.J. Szabo, "Intorno alle origini del giuseppinismo: motivi economico-sociali e aspetti ideologici," *Società et storia* No. 4 (1979), 155-174.
42. Franz A.J. Szabo, "Staatskanzler Fürst Kaunitz und die Anfänge des Josephinismus," in Richard Plaschka, Grete Klingenstein, et al., eds., *Osterreich im Europa der Aufklärung: Kontinuität und Zäsur in Europa zur Zeit Maria Theresias und Josephs II.*, 2 Vols. (Vienna, 1985) I, 525-545.
43. Haugwitz's conversion caused a bitter breach with his own parents. Eberhard Haugwitz, *Die Geschichte der Familie von Haugwitz* (Leipzig, 1910), 121-123. In the best reform-Catholic tradition, he was also a confirmed enemy of the Jesuits (Carl von Hock and Herm. Ignaz Bidermann, *Der österreichische Staatsrat, 1760-1848* (Vienna, 1879), 48), preferring the fiery but simple Capuchins, for whom he endowed a monastery on his Moravian estate of Namiest (Náměst), where he also located his family crypt. Constant von Wurzbach, *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Osterreich*, 60 Vols., (Vienna, 1865-1891) VIII, 69.
44. Adolf Beer, "Die Staatsschulden und die Ordnung des Staatshaushaltes unter Maria Theresia," *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte* LXXXII (1895), 95-96.
45. Ferdinand Maass, *Der Frühjosephinismus* (Vienna and Munich, 1969), 25.
46. Szabo, "Intorno..." 166-168.
47. Dickson, *Finance and Government* I, 252, 329.
48. *Ibid.*, 328.
49. Bérenger, pp. 186-194. Cf. Friedrich Walter, "Die ideellen Grundlagen der österreichischen Staatsreform von 1749," *Zeitschrift für öffentliches Recht* XVII (1937), 195-205.
50. Charles W. Ingrao, *The Hessian Mercenary State: Ideas, Institutions, and Reform under Frederick II, 1760-1785* (Cambridge, 1987), 46-53; *idem*, "Enlightened Absolutism and the German States," *Journal of Modern History* LVIII, Supplement (1986), S161-S180.
51. Franz A.J. Szabo, "Haugwitz, Kaunitz and the Structure of Government in Austria under Maria Theresia, 1745 to 1761," in The Canadian Historical Association, ed., *Historical Papers/Communications historiques: Saskatoon 1979* (Ottawa, 1980), 111-130.
52. Dickson, *Finance and Government* II, 2.
53. Johann Schasching, *Staatsbildung und Finanzentwicklung: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des österreichischen Staatskredits in der 2. Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Innsbruck, 1954).
54. The domestic policies of Kaunitz are the subject of my upcoming book. I have posited some tentative conclusions in "Staatskanzler Fürst Kaunitz und die Aufklärungspolitik Osterreichs," in Walter Koschatzky, ed., *Maria Theresia und Ihre Zeit* (Salzburg, Vienna, 1979), 40-45.
55. Dickson, *Finance and Government*, I, 329.
56. Derek Beales, "The False Joseph II," *Historical Journal* XVIII (1975), 467-495.
57. Saul K. Padover, *The Revolutionary Emperor: Joseph the Second, 1741-1790* (N.Y., 1934); Second Edition: (London, 1967).
58. Derek Beales, "Joseph II's 'Réveries,'" *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs* XXXIII (1980), 142-160.
59. Beales, *Joseph II*, p. 11.
60. The most prominent recent example is Joseph Karniel, *Die Toleranzpolitik Kaiser Joseph II.* (Stuttgart, 1986). See also Hans Wagner, "Die Reise Josephs II, nach Frankreich 1777

- und die Reformen in Osterreich," in *Osterreich und Europa: Festschrift für Hugo Hantsch zum 70. Geburtstag* (Graz, Vienna, Cologne, 1965), 221-246.
61. Franz A.J. Szabo, "Prince Kaunitz and the Balance of Power," *International History Review* I (1979), 399-408; D.E.D. Beales and T.C.W. Blanning, "Prince Kaunitz and 'The Primacy of Domestic Policy,'" *Ibid.* II (1980), 619-624; Franz A.J. Szabo, "Prince Kaunitz and the Primacy of Domestic Policy: A Response," *Ibid.* II (1980), 625-635. Not surprisingly, Beales makes no reference to this debate in the current Joseph volume.
 62. Vienna, Haus-Hof-und Staatsarchiv, Familienarchiv: Sammelbände 7, Joseph to Leopold, 16 January 1772.
 63. Beales, *Joseph II*, 483.
 64. *Ibid.*, 222.
 64. Edith Kotasek, "Die Privatkorrespondenz des Feldmarschalls Grafen Lacy mit Maria Theresia und Joseph II.," *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs* IV (1951), 167-183.
 66. Beales, *Joseph II*, 222, fn. 82. Even a cursory survey through the "Protokolle in Publicis" of the *Kriegsarchiv*, with its detailed subject index, would have yielded rich rewards on Joseph's role in military reform.
 67. Beales refuses to accept this commonly used term, insisting instead on the form "Josephism." "Josephinism," he says, is "German-derived" and hence unacceptable (*Joseph II*, 8, fn. 17.).
 68. Ferdinand Maass, ed., *Der Josephinismus: Quellen zur Seiner Geschichte in Osterreich, 1760-1850*, 5 Vols. (Vienna, 1951-1961).
 69. This is Beales's own translation (*Joseph II*, pp. 106-107) of the memorandum published in Alfred Ritter von Arneth, ed., *Maria Theresia und Joseph II.: Ihre Correspondenz sammt Briefen Joseph's an seinen Bruder Leopold* 3 Vols., (Vienna, 1867-1868) III, 335-361.
 70. Ernst Wangermann, for example, comes in for some undeserved rough criticism, which on at least one occasion (*Joseph II*, p. 465) is the result of a misreading of the original German text by Beales.
 71. Dickson, *Finance and Government* I, 77.