

2016 Hans Rosenberg Book Prize of the Central European History Society

Laudatio

Erin R. Hochman, *Imagining a Greater Germany: Republican Nationalism and the Idea of Anschluss* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2016).

The story of the growth of right-wing *großdeutsch* nationalism on both sides of the German-Austrian border during the 1920s and '30s is well-known, as is that of the Nazi *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938. Far less-known is the fact that a non-authoritarian and deeply democratic form of *großdeutsch* nationalism thrived in both countries at the same time, offering a viable, republican alternative for supporters of German-Austrian union. In *Imagining a Greater Germany*, Erin Hochman offers a richly empirical and meticulously researched account of this republican strand of German nationalism, arguing persuasively that neither its eclipse nor the subsequent triumph of its anti-democratic right-wing rival was inevitable.

For the republican nationalists who stand at the core of *Imagining a Greater Germany*, support of the First Austrian Republic and Weimar Republic melded seamlessly with desire for German-Austrian unification; they were complementary pieces of a unified program to legitimize democracy in the German lands. Drawing upon a repertoire of democratic *großdeutsch* discourses and symbols stretching back to the (failed) experiment of 1848, these republican nationalists – Austrian and German, Jewish and Christian, socialist and liberal democratic – engaged in political activity fundamentally linked to the interpretation of German history, the definition of German nationhood, and the negotiation of the boundaries of Germanness itself. Their vision of this greater Germany was expansive, inclusive, and democratic. Hochman's account of this political activity benefits considerably from her attention to a broad range of cultural materials. Republican nationalists, she observes, argued their case during political rallies; they called for the adoption of particular national flags and anthems; and they marked the anniversaries of the deaths of national cultural heroes such as Beethoven and Goethe.

Imagining a Greater Germany, however, does not just recover this inclusive, democratic strand of German nationalism, forcing us to think anew about both nationalist politics and ideas about German-Austrian union during the interwar period. In its exploration of the parallel republican nationalists on either side of the Austro-German border, and also of the interactions among republican nationalists and their associations, Hochman's study prompts scholars of modern Central European history to inquire further into the ties – cultural, political, and social – that continued to link Austria and Germany between 1918 and 1938.

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