Geoff Mortimer

The Origins of the Thirty Years War and the Revolt in Bohemia, 1618. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Pp. xi + 293. Hb, \$90.

This study seeks to synthesize older and more recent secondary literature on the actual origins of the Thirty Years' War: in this it partly succeeds. It provides one of the most detailed, though not in every case exhaustive, investigations of the precise coming of war between 1618 (the defenestration), the Ulm treaty of summer 1620 intended to contain the Bohemian problem, and the Battle at the White Mountain in November 1620, with a concluding chapter on the eventual continuation of conflict after 1621. The other ten chapters contain a historiographical overview essentially critical of assuming any longer or mid-term acceleration of political and religious hostilities eventually necessarily leading to war (1), a further chapter equally skeptical about any entire breakdown of the potential mediating abilities of the Empire (2), a chapter on the "Bohemian context" (3), on the Counter-Reformation in Habsburg' lands in the empire, another on the feud between the Habsburg brothers (5) and on Matthias's reign and Ferdinand's succession (6), on the Bohemian uprising (7), on the election of both Ferdinand and Frederick V (8), on the "search for allies" including the deal between Maximilian and Ferdinand on the transfer of the Palatinate electoral dignity to his, the Bavarian Wittelsbach branch, and one on the aftermath of the defeat of Frederick, including his losing the Palatinate (10).

For the non-specialist and for undergraduate and graduate students seeking ready synopses, this is a useful book, summarizing lucidly complex interactions of events, though teachers need to alert students that it is not always accurate or complete.

The Society of Jesus is frequently mentioned, in particular in relationship to educational institutions founded or run by the Society, such as the university of Ingolstadt, where among others the later Ferdinand II was educated. The book as a whole is quite useful in understanding to what extent politics, and including politics quite apart from religion, mattered, and to what extent contingency and coincidences mattered. Any simplified idea of, for example, a Jesuit-led Counter-Reformation in turn led necessarily to all out war, is exposed in the book as at least problematic, if not nonsense.

I find the general emphasis on questioning the inevitability of the war (given confessional, constitutional, and political tensions in the empire and their connection to the wider European confessional and political theatre) in favor of arguing the factual entanglement of partly unforeseeable developments quite convincing. At no point during the 1600s or indeed the 1610s was war inevitable, and even after 1620, possibly nowhere prior to the Swedish invasion was there

a dynamic that could not have been stopped in favor of a sustained peace. In particular, Madrid and Paris had, for their own reasons, little inclination for confrontation in Germany prior to the 1630s. Also, Mortimer's dense description of the Habsburg family feud of 1606 to 1611 between Rudolf and Matthias and the massive concessions they had to make to various estates in Moravia, Bohemia, Hungary, and Austria, together with the more conciliatory politics of Matthias and major advisor Melchior Khlesl show us a Habsburg dynasty (German branch) divided among its members, under considerable pressure from outside, with estates able to reap considerable concessions, but with no realistic prospect of aligning with each other across principalities and estate-elites simultaneously careful to keep "the lower orders in their place" (122), and political success resting with the willingness to compromise, not with plans for all-out war. Why, then, did the defenestration of May 23, 1618, and even the further confrontation of Ferdinand with the Bohemians after Matthias's death, given Ferdinand's lack of effective means, not eventually lead to a similar result as the failed attempts of Rudolf to bring Bohemia to obedience, i.e. to an outcome characterized by further compromise or even further gains for the estates, similar to the results of the confrontation with Rudolf in 1609?

If there remains any one major decision that nevertheless led to the successful recapture of Bohemia in 1620 (with considerable effect on the Lutheran nobility in Austria, too) and that also kept military interventions going, it appears to be the deal between Ferdinand and Maximilian on the transfer of the Palatinate electorate and the financing of the League campaign in Bohemia. The subsequent struggles to compromise over this very question would significantly fuel further war efforts that kept the war going. Mortimer's synthesis has another slight factual mistake: Landgrave Moritz of Hesse-Cassel, one of the most controversial Calvinists in the empire of his time, considerable aggravating the conflict with the Lutheran branch of the House of Hesse in Darmstadt over the inheritance of Hesse-Marburg, is given to us as a Lutheran ("both sides were Lutheran," 243). Further, his handling of the crucial negotiations of October 1619 leading to the financing of the League campaign against Bohemia and the transfer of the electoral dignity (192–93) is presented in a way that strangely underplays the role of the Spanish representative Íñigo Vélez de Guevara, 7th count of Oñate. Spain had much to fear from a potential further Protestant elector, not least in terms of its imperial fiefs in Italy, and Oñate's impact here, including Spanish money to finance the League campaign, appears to be the crucial issue turning lack of funds and plans into a coherent financial—military strategy to take back Bohemia. That the Spanish then themselves would have preferred Maximilian to let go in order to secure further peace after Bohemia was captured is not our issue here. But had they

not forged this deal, it is not inconceivable that it had not come about, given the lack of Habsburg resources to pay for Maximilian's efforts and that all the effective problems in getting into a major campaign—lack of funds, problems with one's estates, problems within the German Habsburg family corporation, general hesitancy to risk too much, concerns about legal issues regarding the empire, and so on—could have thwarted any serious concluding effort at any major campaign in 1619 and 1620 as it had before. For a study apparently attempting to provide a reasonable synthesis of the existing secondary literature on the actual outbreak of war, one would at least have expected a more serious engagement with the literature pursuing this argument, which shifts the emphasis for the actual outbreak again toward the strategic aims of the Spanish cousins and outside the empire itself.

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DOI 10.1163/22141332-00401005-06