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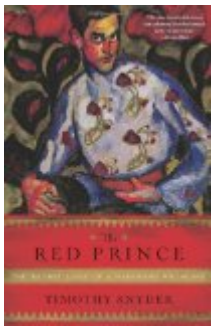
Timothy Snyder. *The Red Prince: The Secret Lives of a Habsburg Archduke.* New York: Basic Books, 2008. viii + 344 pp. $27.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-465-00237-5.



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Timothy Snyder's *The Red Prince* recounts the personal histories of members of the Habsburg dynasty during an epoch dominated by emerging national identities and modern ideologies. The book focuses on Wilhelm von Habsburg (1895-1948), the "Red Prince," who was a Habsburg archduke, a member of the Order of the Golden Fleece, an officer in the Austrian army, a Ukrainian colonel, a playboy, and would-be king of Ukraine. The other central characters are Wilhelm's father, Stefan (1860-1933), and his older brother, Albrecht (1888-1951), both of whom cast their fates with a prospective Polish kingdom. Historical storytelling at its best, this work offers a captivating narrative of Wilhelm and his family. Written in a compelling and clear prose, the book offers a consummate model of historical biography appropriate for both professional historians and a lay audience. Working in a discipline that often focuses more on theory than narrative, the author offers a refreshing tale of a fascinating historical character.

Snyder examines the personal histories of this line of the Habsburg dynasty during an era in which the Habsburg empire was rapidly crumbling, as Europe breathed its last gasp of imperial rule. In place of vast multiethnic empires came modern nation-states largely based on emerging ethnic identities and new ideologies. Within this new geopolitical framework, the Habsburg Empire became obsolete, as illustrated not only by the demise of the regime in 1918 but also by the misfortunes of Wilhelm, Stefan, and Albrecht.

As Snyder maintains, these princes did attempt to adapt Habsburg rule to Europe's new geopolitical realities. During the age of nationalism at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, they sought to enlarge and solidify Habsburg rule by cultivating a "royal nationalism" that would create new states over which they would rule. While Stefan and Albrecht attempted to found a Habsburg throne in Poland, Wilhelm looked to the Ukraine for his kingdom. As Snyder explains, "Wilhelm and his brothers came from a family that had abjured national

identity for centuries, and then embraced multiple nations at the same time" (p. 210). That the three were ethnic Germans in regions dominated by ethnic Poles and Ukrainians had little significance to the Habsburg archdukes. Their enemies, however, were acutely aware that their ethnic profiles differed from those of their prospective subjects.

Snyder delightfully recounts Wilhelm's colorful life. As the son of Stefan and Maria Theresia von Habsburg (1862-1933), a Tuscan archduchess, Wilhelm led a life of extraordinary privilege, raised on the Adriatic island of Losinj along the coast of present-day Croatia. The First World War was decisive in his transformation from Habsburg archduke to the leader of the Ukrainians. Serving as a colonel in the Ukrainian army for the Habsburg Empire, Wilhelm embraced the Ukrainian people, spoke their language, assumed the new Ukrainian name "Vasyl Vyshyvanyi," donned traditional Ukrainian dress, fought alongside them, and helped them to cultivate a national identity. When the Russian Empire collapsed in the face of Bolshevik revolution, Wilhelm seized the mantle, attempting to establish an independent Ukraine in former Habsburg and Romanov territories. Yet, while some ethnic groups, such as the Poles, were awarded a nation-state after the war, there would be no Ukraine, and thus Wilhelm failed to realize his dream of becoming the king of Ukraine.

Wilhelm's father and brother sought different personal and historic paths. Recognizing the potency of nationalism, Stefan looked to the Habsburg lands in Galicia to establish a Polish state. After inheriting a Galician estate, Stefan moved his family to Poland in 1907, hoping to transform this region into a Habsburg crownland with him as regent. When the First World War broke out, Stefan and Albrecht, like Wilhelm, aligned with the Central Powers. While Wilhelm served in the Ukrainian army, Albrecht commanded Polish troops. When the Central Powers proclaimed the short-lived Kingdom of Poland in November 1916, they placed Stefan on the throne.

Wilhelm's affection for the Ukrainians was a source of significant conflict with his father and brother. Tying their fortunes to a prospective Polish royal nation-state, Stefan and Albrecht disdained the Ukrainians in Galicia. As Wilhelm increasingly identified with the Ukrainians, he distanced himself from his family's interests in Poland and forged a new personal identity. In Ukrainian lore, he became legendary as both a patriotic fighter and a social reformer who redistributed land to peasants. Such actions alienated not only his Polish family but also Polish officers who disparagingly nicknamed him the "Red Prince."

As neither a Ukrainian nor a Polish monarchy was established in the wake of the First World War, the Habsburg princes embraced other fates. Living up to his reputation as the black sheep of the family, Wilhelm gallivanted through Europe and left a trail of considerable scandal. He flirted with women, men, and Nazism. When the Second World War broke out, Wilhelm enlisted in the Wehrmacht, even though his brother, Albrecht, had been tortured and imprisoned by the Gestapo for rejecting the Nazis' racial identity. While Albrecht renounced his Germanness, Wilhelm embraced it, at least momentarily. But by 1942, Wilhelm, too, abjured Nazism and began to work as a spy for the Allies. When the war ended, he found himself in occupied Vienna, secretly plotting once again to establish an independent Ukraine. In June 1947, Red Army officials captured him and transferred him to the Ukraine, where a Soviet tribunal convicted him of many crimes, including seeking to be the king of Ukraine. Wilhelm died in a Soviet prison in 1948.

While ***The Red Prince*** focuses on recounting the lives of the Habsburg princes, it excels in its ability to weave a grander historical narrative into its analysis. Indeed, Snyder gracefully explores a host of critical historical developments,

ranging from the Spanish Habsburgs' escapades in Mexico in the 1860s to the Bolshevik revolution, explaining how larger historical trajectories intersected with the lives of his subjects in meaningful ways. The chief question that Snyder investigates, however, is the matter of how these Habsburg princes attempted to forge new identities in an early-twentieth-century Europe dominated by nationalism, totalitarian ideologies, and world war. As representatives of a bygone era, the Habsburg archdukes were truly European during an epoch increasingly defined by nationalism. As Wilhelm and his family sought to craft modern national identities, they were confronted with a complex web of often unstable and contradictory ethnic and geopolitical realities in eastern Europe. Unable to construct personal national identities that could bridge Europe's tumultuous history from 1914 to 1945, Wilhelm and his family had no place in twentieth-century Europe. At best, they were stateless; at worse, they were persecuted and tortured. Their personal tale was thus the story of countless eastern Europeans trapped in a Europe of fluctuating borders and ideologies amid devastating violence. To this extent, Wilhelm, Stefan, and Albrecht personify the eastern European experience in the first half of the twentieth century, and in no small measure, the gravity of their experiences is analogous to those of their eastern European compatriots.