
In Memoriam

Fritz Fellner (1922–2012): In Memoriam

JOHN W. BOYER

THE DISTINGUISHED AUSTRIAN HISTORIAN FRITZ FELLNER passed away on 23 August 2012 at the age of 89. It is especially appropriate that the *Austrian History Yearbook* should honor Fellner's memory, for working closely with R. John Rath, he was a staunch supporter of the *Yearbook's* creation and further development. He also played a leading role in the establishment of the Center of Austrian Studies at the University of Minnesota.

A graduate of the University of Vienna (doctorate 1948, Habilitation, 1960), where he also worked as an assistant and docent from 1954 to 1964, Fritz enjoyed a distinguished academic career as a full professor at the University of Salzburg from 1964 until 1993. He also served as the chair of the Kommission für Neuere Geschichte Österreichs from 1990 to 2007. Fritz was the author of important books on the Dreibund, on the history of the Kommission (with Franz Adlgasser and Doris A. Corradini), and a major biographical lexicon of Austrian historians in the twentieth century (again, with Doris Corradini), but he also worked comfortably in the genre of stand-alone scholarly articles. A number of Fritz's articles rank as classics in the field, including his essay on Austrian identity after 1945 (an English translation of which was published in the *Journal of Modern History*) and his three valuable articles on various aspects of early Austrian liberalism in the 1860s and 1870s. Fritz was among the first to chart the inner workings and structural constraints of the Liberal politics in constitutional Austria, and later historians continue to find themselves very much in his debt for these studies. Fritz made equally valuable contributions on the origins of World War I and on various facets of the domestic history of the war and on the peace conference that followed. He also published a large number of helpful and stimulating essays on the intellectual framework of Austrian history and historiography, insisting that Austrian history must be set within the wider framework of Central European history and historiography and not simply manipulated for the purposes of justifying a post-1945 Austrian national identity.

Fritz Fellner's contributions as an editor were no less prodigious. To cite only the most prominent example: Fritz's two-volume edition of the diaries of Josef Redlich—*Schicksalsjahre Österreichs* (1953–54)—is one of the most notable primary sources for the political, diplomatic, and cultural history of the late Habsburg Empire. This edition, which was republished in a revised and expanded three-volume format with the collaboration of

Doris Corradini in 2011, cost Fritz an enormous amount of time and effort (the transcription of Redlich's almost indecipherable hand was itself a monumental achievement); but the result was a splendid work of scholarship. No one can work in the field of late imperial Habsburg politics without a close knowledge of these volumes.

Fritz Fellner was a staunch, indeed legendary, friend of American historians and American historiography of Austria and of the Habsburg Empire. He first came into contact with real Americans as a prisoner of war in Italy during the last stages of World War II. Over the course of his career, Fritz came to the United States regularly to visit his brother who lived in Portland, Oregon, to lecture at various U.S. colleges and universities, and to serve as visiting professor at Texas, Western Illinois, Stanford, and the University of Minnesota. Fritz also served as the registrar of the Institute of European Studies in Vienna, teaching history to many American college students under the aegis of IES from 1954 to 1974, and he also served for many years as a consultant and patron to the Fulbright program in Austria. Fritz was extremely knowledgeable about American history, and both at Vienna and Salzburg he regularly offered courses and supervised theses dealing with the history of the United States.

I first met Fritz Fellner when he was on a lecture tour in the United States in 1976, and he gave a lecture on Austrian diplomatic history in the 1870s and 1880s at the University of Chicago. Over the course of the decades, we stayed in regular contact, and after his retirement from Salzburg, when Fritz spent much of the year in Vienna, I often visited him in his working space in the Neustiftgasse, which he charmingly called his "Emeritage." This was a flat in the Neustiftgasse 47, two floors below Fritz's actual home, that functioned as his library, his study, and his editorial working space. Here he would continually recount fascinating stories about past and present historians, about his own life and career, and about his still very ambitious publication projects.

This building on the Neustiftgasse was one in which Fritz took special personal pride, and he eagerly described how his grandfather, who was a master baker, built it in 1903. Photographs of the construction and early history of the building were proudly displayed on the landing outside of Fritz's front door.

Fritz Fellner was a scholar of extraordinary generosity, phenomenal energy, and supple thought. Fritz was also a man of convictions with robust intellectual likes and dislikes. Even when one disagreed with his assessment of some strands of Austrian and German historiographical traditions in the early and mid twentieth century, one found that he offered cogent arguments to defend his positions, and that one had to take these views very seriously. He enjoyed energetic debates, and the give and take of discussing controversial historical issues with Fritz was delightful.

The number of young historians in Austria, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, and the United States to whom Fritz offered significant moral and material assistance in the early stages of their careers is enormous. Like many young foreign scholars whom he helped, I found Fritz to be an emissary of an engaging and welcoming internationalism but always tempered by an insistence on the most rigorous standards of scholarly research and analysis. As he once put it, "the cases in which I give unrestricted praise are extremely rare." Fritz was profoundly unpretentious and always open to new ideas, and he had a wonderfully creative mind. He also hated sloppy thinking of any kind.

American historians of the Habsburg Empire and modern Austria owe Fritz Fellner an immense debt, not only for his many professional accomplishments, but also for his magnificent collegiality and friendship.