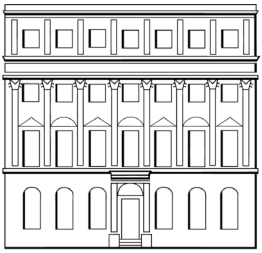

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Review of Simon Adler, *Political Economy in the Habsburg Monarchy 1750–1774: The Contribution of Ludwig Zinzendorf*

by Esteban Mauerer

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SIMON ADLER, *Political Economy in the Habsburg Monarchy 1750–1774: The Contribution of Ludwig Zinzendorf*, Palgrave Studies in the History of Finance (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), xi + 288 pp. ISBN 978 3 030 31006 6. £99.99 (hardcover)

Count Ludwig Friedrich Julius von Zinzendorf (1721–80) is known to historians of the Habsburg monarchy as a holder of prominent positions in the nation's fiscal and tax administration, and as a minister on Maria Theresa's Council of State. His role as a fiscal expert—especially as the president of the Hofrechenkammer (the monarchy's audit office, founded in 1762)—has been discussed in broad overview by Friedrich Walter, P. G. M. Dickson, Christine Lebeau, and most recently in several essays in an edited volume on the administrative history of the Habsburg monarchy during the early modern period.[1] However, his individual profile at the intersection between politics and economics has so far remained obscure. This should not come as a surprise, given that the studies listed above deal with the financial and tax policies of the Habsburg fiscal–military state primarily from the perspective of administrative history, to the exclusion of research into Zinzendorf's life and work.

This is what prompted Simon Adler to place Zinzendorf at the centre of his book (which is based on a Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of Cambridge), and to examine the count's role as an observer of economic conditions in France and England, as a participant in economic discourse, and as a fiscal and economic policymaker. In the process, Adler goes far beyond pure intellectual history—despite

Trans. by Jozef van der Voort (GHIL)

[1] Thomas Fellner and Heinrich Kretschmayr (eds.), *Die österreichische Zentralverwaltung,* 14 vols. (Vienna, 1907–70), sect. ii, vol. i, pt. i: Friedrich Walter, *Die Geschichte der österreichischen Zentralverwaltung in der Zeit Maria Theresias (1740–1780)* (1938); P. G. M. Dickson, *Finance and Government under Maria Theresia, 1740–1780*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1987); Christine Lebeau, *Aristocrates et grands commis à la cour de Vienne (1748–1791): Le modèle français* (Paris, 1996); Michael Hochedlinger, Petr Maťa, and Thomas Winkelbauer (eds.), *Verwaltungsgeschichte der Habsburgermonarchie in der Frühen Neuzeit*, vol. i: *Hof und Dynastie, Kaiser und Reich, Zentralverwaltungen, Kriegswesen und landesfürstliches Finanzwesen* (Vienna, 2019).

claiming that his book is 'primarily concerned with ideas' (p. 7). He organizes his material along three thematic axes. First, he reconstructs Zinzendorf's economic and fiscal analyses and concepts as they developed over time; second, he situates him in the context of the economic ideas advanced by French and British authors; and third, he explores the count's role in the discourses of Vienna's political and administrative elites.

Adler bases his study on a dense array of sources from multiple archives, including the Zinzendorf collection in the Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv, which has been systematically analysed here for the first time. Detailed paraphrases of Zinzendorf's own writings demand concentration on the part of the reader, but offer profound insights into the thinking of a state economist during the eighteenth century.

Adler's goal is not to write Zinzendorf's life story, but he nonetheless describes the count's biography in some detail. In the introduction to the book, we learn that Zinzendorf was born to a Lower Austrian family that had partly turned to Protestantism—especially Pietism—and settled outside the Habsburg dominions during the seventeenth century. His parents and grandparents had found a new sphere of activity in Saxony, but maintained links with their region of origin. In 1739, Zinzendorf converted to Catholicism in order to inherit the estate bequeathed by the Catholic branch of the family in Lower Austria, which was held in trust. In doing so, he laid the foundations for his later career as a civil servant under Maria Theresa. On the level of family politics, it is interesting to note that Zinzendorf's younger half-brother Karl (1739–1813) also embarked on a successful career in the Viennese court and government after converting to Catholicism. As governor of Trieste, president of the Hofrechenkammer, and above all as the author of a unique set of diaries, he was until now the better known of the two brothers.[2]

In 1746 Zinzendorf studied law in Leipzig, before entering the provincial government of Lower Austria the following year and becoming an assessor of the court of the Estates in 1748. Of crucial influence

[2] Partial edition: Grete Klingenstein, Eva Faber, and Antonio Trampus (eds.), *Europäische Aufklärung zwischen Wien und Triest: Die Tagebücher des Gouverneurs Karl Graf Zinzendorf 1776–1782*, 4 vols. (Vienna, 2009).

on his subsequent career were the links he established in 1749 with Count Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz, who was appointed ambassador to Paris in 1750. The ambitious Zinzendorf, who had a keen interest in economic matters, became a privileged member of Kaunitz's entourage—a circle of associates that was gradually expanded by the equally ambitious ambassador, who in 1753 became state chancellor and played a central role in guiding Habsburg policy for almost four decades. A clientelistic relationship developed between the two men that lasted for decades, to the benefit of both sides.

Chapter two describes how Zinzendorf's inclusion in the delegation to Paris gave him the opportunity to travel, especially through Brittany. There he gathered information about the French East India Company and the navy, which he recorded in memoranda. In another detailed memorandum he examined the links between the size of France's population, the state of its agriculture, and its trade activity in light of the country's monetary circulation, which was itself connected to state credit. Thanks to these inquiries, Zinzendorf made a name for himself among Viennese officials, and the study of interactions between different economic factors became his core interest. He also conducted research with direct practical applications, seeking to understand the origins of state power and prosperity in order to accurately rank the various European nations. To this end, he also travelled to England. Zinzendorf's studies thus form part of the historical background to the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756.

In chapters three and four, Adler shows that Zinzendorf's memoranda of the 1750s and 1760s should be situated in a disciplinary field inhabited by countless authors. Zinzendorf had detailed knowledge of economic debates in France through the writings of figures such as Jean-François Melon, who was in turn influenced by British writers. Jacques Vincent de Gournay, an intendant in the French Bureau of Commerce, conducted studies with a broad empirical basis that set out the economic conditions in France and the Habsburg domain, and emphasized the importance of the circulation of money through the economy. De Gournay applied the same methods as Zinzendorf and produced similar findings, and both authors made use of a Europe-wide network of informants and suppliers of data. Zinzendorf's translations of writings on fiscal and trade policy should also be considered in this context. Of

these texts, which Zinzendorf began working on while he was still a student, the most important was his translation of John Law's influential 1705 treatise *Money and Trade Considered*, which was published in 1758 under the title *Gedanken vom Gelde und von der Handlung*. Adler demonstrates in detail that Zinzendorf extended Law's thoughts on paper money and banks by adding intertextual references to other authors, inserting additional text, and so on. Here once again, the significance of the circulation of knowledge is revealed through textual analysis.

By engaging with French and British authors and by adopting best practices from other countries, Zinzendorf raised the bar for economic discussions between experts in Vienna, as we see in chapter five. It is therefore only natural that he looked to the Bank of England when his thoughts turned to the establishment of an effective state bank—one that would regulate the flow of money and above all act as a lender in order to support all sectors of the economy and increase prosperity. At times of war, it became important for the public finances to be administered on a basis of trust and transparency in order to keep the state budget adequately supplied with money.

In the sixth and most wide-ranging chapter, Adler assesses Zinzendorf's position in contemporary political and economic discourse and in the apparatus of government in Vienna. Zinzendorf was an empirical economist focused on solving practical problems, and he developed his ideas through conversation, correspondence, reading widely, and undertaking research trips. As a government official, however, he also had informal access to Maria Theresa and her husband Francis I, to whom he was a close adviser. The latter in particular was very interested in economic questions. Zinzendorf was convinced that tried-and-tested concepts drawn mainly from England and France should be applied to the Habsburg monarchy. He played an especially important role during war time, standing at the centre of a diverse array of projects and proposals for fiscal and economic reform that were drawn up by both officials and private citizens. He discussed economic problems in circles consisting mainly of noble functionaries occupying prominent posts in the apparatus of state, many of whom had clientelistic relations with the state chancellor Kaunitz.

When it came to the reform of fiscal institutions, Zinzendorf had a decisive influence on the chancellor. His goal was to establish public

bodies in Vienna that would have detailed knowledge of financial flows and would be able to exert regulatory control, and Zinzendorf came closer to achieving it as president of the Hofrechenkammer. The idea was for these bodies to monitor the central fiscal administration, supervise the accounts of the provincial Estates, and play a primary role in overseeing the national budget. However, at a time when the apparatus of state was undergoing constant reform, the Hofrechenkammer proved short-lived—partly because of its overextended remit, but also due to conflicts over its area of authority and disputes between individual officials. In 1773 it was placed under the control of the Hofkammer (the Habsburg treasury), and Zinzendorf was dismissed from his role as president and excluded from political life.

Adler demonstrates that Zinzendorf's political and economic thought was primarily focused on the state. It therefore stands to reason that his economic ideas circulated in the domain of government, or in other words, among the administrative elites. There was no critical public sphere to speak of in the Habsburg monarchy beyond the discourse between state officials. At the same time, Zinzendorf underscored the importance of economic factors in political decision-making. He not only sought to solve urgent financial problems, but also believed that a strong economy with a healthy credit and banking system was the basis of state power. Zinzendorf's economic analyses and ideas led him to deeper insights than had been achieved by Heinrich Gottlob von Justi or Joseph von Sonnenfels. Although Justi's and Sonnenfels's cameralist doctrines were taught to future civil servants at universities, the ideas circulating within the government itself stemmed from Zinzendorf.

Simon Adler's rigorously structured book (including an index) expands our knowledge of the eighteenth century considerably. Zinzendorf clearly emerges as an economic thinker operating between theory and practice, as a networker and active follower of European discourse, and as part of the administrative elite under Maria Theresa. Adler does not deal in generalizations or abstract concepts; his preferred method is to describe events with close reference to the sources, and to categorize and interpret strictly on the basis of empirical findings. As a result, his study produces substantial insights that are relevant to a number of different fields—not just economic history,

but also intellectual and administrative history, as well as the history of the fiscal–military state. Adler's book therefore deserves a wider readership than just historians of the Habsburg monarchy.

ESTEBAN MAUERER works for the Historical Commission at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and teaches early modern history at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. He is the editor of the first four volumes of the *Protokolle des Bayerischen Staatsrats 1799–1817* (2006–21) covering the period from 1799 to 1812. Among his other publications are *Südwestdeutscher Reichsadel im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert: Geld, Reputation, Karriere. Das Haus Fürstenberg* (2001) and (as editor) *Supplikationswesen und Petitionsrecht im Wandel der Zeit und im Spiegel der Publikationen der Historischen Kommission* (2020).