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GÖ¼nter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, eds. *Austrian Historical Memory and National Identity.* New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997. 399 pp. $30.00 (paper), ISBN 978-1-56000-902-3.

Reviewed by Josef Langer (UniversitÃƒÂ¤t Klagenfurt)
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Austria: No Time for Nationhood?

Contemporary Austrian Studies is a distinguished series in the field of historical studies. It is rather difficult to read and review because of the complexity of its content (an apology that I will not be able to do justice to each of the numerous contributors to this volume). In the "Topical Essays" section, which comprises about two fifths of the journal, the following themes are discussed: 1) regional versus national identity (Mathis, Barth-Scalmani, Kuprian, and Mazohl-Wallnig); 2) the construction of Austria's collective identity after World War II (Uhl, Pelinka, and Baller); 3) the Waldheim affair in the 1980s (Herzstein); 4) problems of adaptation for Austria after joining the European Union (Kaiser); and 5) America's memory of World War II (Berry). Proposals on the Mauthausen Concentration Camp Memorial follow. In the next part, which the editors call "Forum," the history of Austrian intelligence studies is discussed by two contributions (Naftali, Beer). The volume is rounded out by review essays, book reviews, an annual review, and the List of Authors.

Though all contributions to the volume may stand independently and for a newcomer to this field they might even appear as completely separate (what, for example, does Austrian local identity have to do with the U.S. remembering World War II?), the articles can be read as mosaics of memory forming a unified picture. In this picture the non-Austrian authors tend to draw more realistic and analytical lines (e.g. Berry, Overmans, Kaiser, and Herzstein), whereas the Austrians provide the impressionistic background. Also, the metaphor of *Fixierbild* may be applied. Depending on the reader, either a nation based on taboos and self-deception (Pelinka, Uhl), or a people who knows how to survive (Overmans) and whose collective memory is ultimately safe in the hands of "a younger generation of free-thinking and critical World War II specialists" (Bischof, p. 305) emerges.

I have chosen not to be tempted by the deceptions of the *Fixierbild* image, but rather will turn to those issues in the volume which, from my point of view, appear most important at the end of this millennium. If there is anything of contemporary relevance, then it is the direct and indirect references to the emergence of a *European identity* and the coinciding transformation of *national identity*. Though the volume is not intended to focus on this question, it does significantly touch it in several contributions.

The most obvious reference is by Wolfram Kaiser when he writes about "Austria's Accession to the European Union." He even speaks of a "silent revolution" which joining the European Union has started in Austria. Then he criticizes the sometimes complacent, sometimes almost hysterically stressed statement that "Austria has always belonged to Europe." He claims that Austria's post-1945 policy of identity, being a "peace-loving nation and essential bridge in the East-West and North-South conflict" (p. 136) became isolated somehow from the Western definition of Europe, which after 1989 became the dominant reality. Kaiser is right that this reality, of which Austria has been a part since 1995, not only affects economic policy, institutions, and political culture, but also Austrian identity *per se*. Though Kaiser excellently analyses the structural implications of joining the E.U. for Austria, he refrains from touching on the mental side of collective identity, except in the chapter on political mentality. He observes that the Austrian political class has "difficulty in getting used to thinking and acting as part of a wider community of states" and that the occasional internationalist rhetoric distracts from "a distinctively xenophobic and inward-looking political culture" (p. 147). Kaiser concludes that Austria's accession to the E.U. demands, and will continue to demand, substantial domestic adjustments in policy, institutions, and collective self perception.

Kaiser departs from a narrow but quite common understanding in the West that Europe is equivalent to the space of the European Economic Community–today the

European Union. Though it is the policy of the E.U. to establish a political order beyond the nation state, it simultaneously supports the cultural diversity of Europe. Thus the question is rarely raised what the end of the nation state might mean for national cohesion and national consciousness; whereas nationalism is seen very critically. It is quite likely that the consequences for identity of European integration will first come to the surface in Austria, because of the 15 E.U. countries Austria is the last one to establish itself as a separate nation in the sense of modern nation theory.

When, in the 1980s, the Austrians responded to the accusations against Kurt Waldheim from the outside by voting overwhelmingly for him to become *Bundespraesident*, was it not the insulted feeling of classical national identity which led them to do so? This brings me to the contribution of Robert Herzstein. Although I otherwise strongly sympathize with his determination to find out the truth about Waldheim's past, unfortunately in this volume he adopts uncritically the theory that the candidate represented something specific (something ugly) in Austrian culture and hence was successful. The opposite should be considered: He just had nothing in common with his electorate at all. If he was appreciated, then this was due to his success in New York as Secretary General of the U.N. Without the accusations from abroad, Waldheim would have never been elected president, because for the average Austrian his conduct is too aloof. The candidate was not elected because he was a guarantor of the survival of *Opfermythos* or *Pflichterfuellung*, but simply because he was attacked from abroad at a time when the national pride of Austrians had reached its peak. In this mood anybody "of them" (the Austrians) would have been protected and defended.

Kurt Waldheim did not run for a second term. I believe that in the heyday of European nation states he could have done so successfully. But in the late eighties the international circumstances had changed, and not only for Austria. In 1989 the country, though *immerwaehrend neutral*, applied for membership in the E.U. I would suggest that without the Waldheim Affair the resistance to this step among the population would have been stronger. Though Waldheim was elected, national consciousness was heavily shaken. Some even saw the danger of Austria becoming a pariah nation as were South Africa or Israel at that time. The true reasons why no other population in Europe has so overwhelmingly voted for E.U. membership (two-thirds of the electorate) as did the Austrians in 1994 have still to be discovered. I am convinced the troubles with Waldheim played their share. The order of the European Union also promises to be a shelter from a rough international environment. Paradoxically those who haunted the Austrians with their *Verstrickung* in the atrocities of the Third Reich (see Pelinka, Uhl, Bailer) also paved the way for a new *Anschluss*–this time to the European Union. When the application was send to Brussels in 1989, ironically some of the protagonists of this discourse were warning of an *Anschluss* to Germany.

Though studies in the first half of the nineties show Austrian national consciousness still intact–Austrians occupy the highest rank in pride for their country, right next to the English–among the younger generation national consciousness is crumbling. Almost one third of the 17-19 year-olds do not have the feeling of belonging to a nation. But the alternative for collective orientation does not seem to be the region, as Franz Mathis and Brigitte Mazohl-Wallnig suggest. The young rather turn to the artificial identities of the consumer society. Also, the results of population sampling do not show a particular appreciation of the *Bundeslaender* over Austria as such.[1] The identification is rather with the immediate local environment and not with the region. To the contrary, one can observe an increasing emphasis among parts of the political elite on fostering the *Bundeslaender* in an E.U.-Austria. I guess this political expectation is also reflected in the contributions by Mathis and Barth-Scalmani/Kuprian/Mazohl-Wallnig, which draw attention to the fact that some of the *Bundeslaender* have an older and more stable collective identity than Austria itself. Mathis' starting point is a critical attitude toward the Austrian Millennium anniversary of 1996.[2] In his opinion Austria's long history has not been able to create a solid Austrian identity. Why? Simply because Austria is too heterogeneous, he argues. Therefore "a lasting Austrian identity" should be based on the existence of a diversity that will "include everyone and exclude no one" (p. 25).

Though it is true, as Mathis states, that sometimes outstanding personalities are claimed by the *Bundeslaender* as their own, the question is also whether these personalities identify themselves with the region. I would say this is very rare in Austria. Contrary to other European societies (eg. Finland), a significant regional intelligentsia never existed after World War II. On the other hand, for Austria as a whole it certainly did. Even if this intelligentsia was to some extent dependent on German publishing houses and thus never a full fledged national intelligentsia, it had its distinctive Austrian character. This was frequently evident in the literature produced by Austrians. But the fact that the writing of these authors was very often corrected by the editors of the Ger-

man publishing houses to the German version of *Deutsch* shows the limitations of this intelligentsia. Here it should also be mentioned that the Austrian academic system is heavily staffed with professors from Germany. In this respect it is probably the most international in Europe. I have never, anywhere, seen a discussion of the impact of this reality on intellectual and cultural life.

Mathis purposely tries to avoid the term "national" when referring to Austria (p. 26). Here he meets with the consciousness of those young people from the above mentioned survey who do not feel they belong to a "nation." Like them, he obviously already also has a post-national identity or flirts with Robert Musil's *Weltoesterreichertum*. Unfortunately, the term "identity" is not consistently used in his contribution. I would agree with Mathis when he claims that 1000 years of Austrian history have contributed little toward giving Austrians a national identity. But I think an Austrian identity exists, and traces of it can be found beyond the borders of the present state of Austria. To illuminate these traces was the main emphasis of the Millennium activities, and not to mystify the Austrian identity as Mathis suggests.

Joining the European Union has put collective identity in Austria under new strains. The contributions to volume five of *Contemporary Austrian Studies* indicate it is obviously easy for Austrian historians to abandon the idea of Austria as a nation, which in the seventies and eighties some of them were eager to celebrate. In no other European society is the impact of the European Union on identity policy so strongly felt. The feeling from the eighties of Austria as a self-assured, mature nation is gone. As in this book, different identity scenarios are frequently discussed. Recently a distinguished member of the conservative party even predicted, in the daily *Die Presse*, the disintegration of Austria into Euro-regions in the next thirty years. *Finis Austriae*? The future looks cloudy. Under the circumstances of the E.U., a strong national consciousness or nationalism is unlikely. Though regionalism is part of E.U. policy, I do not believe it can substitute for the collective identity of a nation to a significant extent. This also holds true for the cross-border Euro-regions.

There are three likely options, the first is that a significant portion of the inhabitants of Austria will perceive themselves as Europeans in the way their ancestors felt allegiance to a nation. This is not unlikely because, like the nation state, the E.U. is first of all a political organization demanding allegiance and identification. Whether the E.U. will be able to mobilize the population like the nation state could–Europe as an imaginary community–remains a question. Even more likely is, second, that the beneficiaries and those on the payroll of Brussels will develop a kind of imperial identity similar to the bureaucrats of the Habsburg Monarchy. For Austrians it should be easy to slip into this kind of identity. Also likely, it seems to me, is, third, that people will take temporary and synthetic collective identities, as offered by commercial agencies and the world media. As these areas are dominated by the U.S. the process will bring Austrians (and other Europeans) closer to the Americans.

Though I have decided to put the emphasis of this review on identity, I would like to draw attention also to the research note by Ruediger Overmans, "German and Austrian Losses in World War II." In his study he shows that the death rate of soldiers from Austria was one third lower (nineteen percent) than those from Germany proper (twenty-nine percent). Without going into speculation, I suggest that especially those who favor the theory of Austrians as collaborators of Nazi Germany should take this into consideration. If anybody could make these figures speak, maybe we would learn that Austrians resisted the war to an extent nobody has yet imagined. People can resist in many ways, also in withholding their full capacity in battle. But maybe the Austrians just weren't seen by the Germans as tough and battle worthy like their Teutonic cousins.

Regarding the book in general: Though it seems that all contributions have been proof read, some mistakes remain, for example on page 57, footnote 4 the words *Peace of* should have been deleted. Furthermore, in the "Table of Contents" a research note by Radomir Luza is mistakenly listed under "Forum." Inside the journal it is in the correct place. And of course Anton Pelinka is wrong when he calls Joerg Haider a "Carinthian populist" (p. 104). In Carinthia everybody knows that Haider is a native of Upper Austria.

Finally, in his "Survey of Austrian Politics: 1995," Reinhold Gaertner among others reports about the letter bombs sent to high-profile people (pp. 390). As is typical for post-Waldheim political discourse in Austria, he suggests the extreme right is behind it. In October 1997, after years of unsuccessful police investigations, a man was accidentally caught who, according to clear evidence, committed the crime and most likely alone. His personality seems to be similar to that of the "Unabomber" in the U.S. He was caught accidentally (by *Kommissar Zufall*), though it is said that police had screened 50,000 people. He was not among them. Is this not further evidence for the inadequacy of looking at the present through memory, which can only provide us with broken and distorted

images?

Notes:

[1]. See Max Haller, *Identitaet und Nationalstolz der Oesterreicher*, (Wien: Boehlau, 1996).

[2]. See HABSBURG's discussion on this topic, archived at http://www.h-net.msu.edu/habsweb/archives/threads/ug.html.

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