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Honing Political Skills without Being in Politics

One of the more enduring discussions about twentieth-century Austrian history is whether, at the time of the birth of the First Republic (rather a caesarian than a natural procedure), the people of that remnant of the empire which became the small republic had sufficient experience to establish a viable body politic and weather the troubled political seas of postwar Central Europe. Similar questions concern the successor states. The immediately preceding volume of this series gave evidence that there were differences among the medley of peoples of the empire in their experience with political activity and governmental practice, but none had the kind of practice that seasoned them for maintaining independent, stable, participatory governments.[1] As political participation in the monarchy was restricted to the higher echelons of society until late in the period, the great majority of the people learned little of how one functions in a political body. The present volume is a well-wrought study offering an answer to the tacit question that arises from its predecessor: if the organization and operation of the political and administrative apparatus of the government afforded the peoples of the monarchy insufficient political experience for them to participate effectively in government, where did they acquire the requisite skills? The proposition of this volume

is that there were two realms of activity in which people gained experience that could compensate for their lack of participation in governmental affairs under the monarchy: organizing and functioning in nongovernmental associations, and founding and developing a robust press.

Part 1 of the volume is concerned with the development of popular organizations and their purposes, the government's attitude toward that phenomenon, regulation of the organizations, and their activities, successes, and impact on society. In the mid-nineteenth century, the bitter memories of 1848-1849 were much too fresh for the government to look with anything other than a jaundiced eye on the notion of people banding together in any kinds of association, no matter what their titles or avowed purposes. Popular associations could bring greater likelihood of festering grievances and attempts to win redress, thus sharpening the danger of reigniting rebellion in the people. But, as the memories of the revolution slowly receded, governmental repression was gradually relaxed. However, the authorities only reluctantly granted, and warily extended, the rights of association and assembly for sundry purposes, and it was not until 1867, with the promulgation of the Associations Law, that the right included association for political ends.

Thereafter, associations began to multiply and flourish.

In organizing associations, fraternal groups, sports clubs, and the like, people acquired proto-political acumen and habituated themselves to acting in common purpose. They learned to sense social dynamics, reconcile them, and turn them to benefit. They learned to define aspirations and goals, and to focus on and accomplish them. They learned to instill a sense of community, foster in their fellows a sense of engagement, fire their thoughts, and galvanize them to act on those thoughts. They also learned how to react to and overcome failures. Fenced out of the political arena, they learned elsewhere the arts needed to form cohesive, vigorous groups. As well as achieving the more modest and innocuous goals of nonpolitical associations, they were cultivating skills that also could be practiced in political organizations and activity.

Even though the founding purposes of an association may have been quite innocent of any nationalistic inclinations, the members were usually of kindred ethnic, national, and social groups, a circumstance that could give their every purpose and activity an ethnic or national hue. With the stirring passions of romanticism and the nationalistic ambitions of 1848-1849 still abroad in the land, sorely wounded, but not slain in the defeats that followed, it would have been surprising if the increasing associations, and growing number of members of those associations, had been deaf to the potent, beguiling call of nation. That call echoed ill tidings for the monarchy. After 1867, associations played a considerable role in the assertions of nationality that ultimately led to the dissolution of the monarchy.

The first half of the volume, part 1, is composed of an introduction and twenty-six chapters, the longest just over one hundred pages in length, several nearly one hundred pages long, but most nearer to fifty pages. The first chapter presents a review of the history of the monarchy from before 1848 to the twentieth century, the Great War, and dissolution, affording a context for the essays that constitute the bulk of this part. The second chapter recounts in more detail the conditions and events of 1848-1849 that propelled the monarchy into the second half of the nineteenth century under the influence of the heady, but finally disappointing, exertions of the revolutions.

Thereafter, the succeeding chapters describe the processes and evaluate the results of the founding and development of associations in Cisleithania, looking especially to their role in the creation of a "public" capable of

framing a "public opinion." Administrative units on the Austrian side of the monarchy are used to demark the purview of each chapter. Most of the chapters review the nature and effect of the Revolution of 1848 in their particular areas before discussing the rise of associations. Lower Austria, including Vienna, is the subject of the first chapter, which emphasizes political issues. Chapter 2 uses the rubric "West Austria" to group Upper Austria, Salzburg, Tirol, and Vorarlberg (then still governed from Innsbruck as part of Tirol), and is chiefly interested in the interactions of social classes, cultural predilections, and economic interests at work in the growth of associations and their sway in society. Steiermark, Carinthia, and Carniola each has a separate chapter wherein the authors recognize mixed nationalities as a stimulating addition to the brew of conditions that encouraged groups to associate. The next chapter is on the coastlands of Trieste, Goerz-Gradisca, and Istria, with a following chapter treating Dalmatia separately from those three. Bohemia, a rich, lively, multicultural province with a cosmopolitan capital, has an extensive exposition of nearly one hundred pages describing an array of associational activity appropriate to its colorful and vigorous political, economic, and cultural life. For the same reason, Moravia and Silesia together receive space and attention equal to that given Bohemia. Galicia and Bukovina occupy the next two chapters, with there being less to report in Galicia than from its neighbors to the west. The chapter on Bukovina, a supposedly backward land, leads one to judge that all its neighbors in the monarchy could have taken lessons from Bukovina in the graces and sophistication of living in a society of very mixed nationalities. Lombardy-Venetia, the last element of the monarchy to be treated, was hardly a fit in the Habsburg collection of lands and peoples; it was west European, not central European in character and, in any case, was not a part of the monarchy long enough to figure largely in the period 1848-1918. Defeats in war took Lombardy from the monarchy in 1859 and Venetia in 1866, before the burgeoning of associations.

At this point, the scheme of assigning chapters by administrative areas is suspended to admit three especially well-turned chapters on matters bearing on the status of women in Cisleithania. The subject was visited briefly in earlier pages, but these chapters are well worth the reader's attention. The emphasis is on women's organizations, education, working conditions and opportunities, political involvement, electoral reform, and strategy for achieving women's enfranchisement. The authors, Renate Flich, Gabriella Hauch, and Birgitta Bader-

Zaar, have presented a first-rate depiction of the efforts of women to win their rightful place in society in the face of legal restrictions, imposed handicaps, and hostile or condescending attitudes of the established social order.

Part 1 concludes with nine chapters relating the history of associations in the Kingdom of Hungary, introduced with an overview of politics in Hungary from the *Vormaerz* to the twentieth century. These chapters deal with the emergence of associations in each of the national groups in the Kingdom of Hungary: Germans, Hungarians, Romanians, Croats, Serbs, Slovaks, and even a short essay on the Ruthenes (by Paul Robert Magocsi, the only North American author participating). The last chapter in this part is concerned with women's alliances and strivings in Hungary, serving as a complement to the one on women in Cisleithania.

Part 2 of the volume is an examination of the founding, increase, and persuasive effect of periodical publications in the monarchy. This part opens with three introductory chapters: the first on the evolution of press laws in the monarchy; the second on the general role of the press in modernizing society, with particular attention to urbanization, political activity, and economic development; and the third considers whether there was a monarchy-wide press. Significantly, there were only a handful of publications, in Vienna, Budapest, and Prague, that had monarchy-wide, or even Cisleithanian- or Transleithanian-wide, reach and influence. None of them had the international stature or aura of authority that was the pride of publications in London, Paris, or New York City.

The balance of this part is divided into chapters according to the languages of publication, a rational measure, inasmuch as the press is a medium of language, and lends itself much more conveniently to study by that definition than by geographical or administrative demarcations. Languages, however, and the interests of those who speak them, spill over boundaries, so the political divisions of the monarchy do, indeed, figure in studies of the press by language groups, of which there are twelve defined here: German, Magyar, Czech, Polish, Ruthene, Romanian, Croatian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovene, Italian, and, taken together, Hebrew and Yiddish.

A plethora of publications at local levels compensated the paucity of international and monarchy-wide publications. Some appeared daily, some several times per week, others weekly or monthly, and some only occasionally. These publications served all manner of purposes and organizations. Some were voices for social organizations,

bulletins for choral groups, or religious publications; others were trade, business, or professional journals; others announced study groups or sports associations; further, there were purveyors of advice on how to do various things; and there was a host of other causes over which to spill ink. Also, inevitably, there were heralds summoning those interested to various national causes, doing service as rallying instruments for ethnic clubs and the like.

Many of these publications had very narrow readership and a short life; others fared better, but not spectacularly; still others flourished over long periods and enjoyed wide readership. On balance, as checkered as the evolution of journalism was at the time, after the press laws were relaxed in the sixth and seventh decades of the century, the press grew in prestige and appreciably affected affairs in the monarchy, notably in issues of politics and nationality. Some of the more responsible members of the press (*Die Presse* and *Neue Freie Presse* come to mind) saw themselves as more than mere news-bearing couriers; they aspired to be educators, elevating the use of language, spreading knowledge, and enhancing sophistication in the population. Most, however, focused their attention on local news and affairs, were advocates for groups or causes, and evinced little vision beyond narrow, close horizons. The thrust of their policies tended toward division, not cohesion, in the array of populations in the monarchy. The press could, if it were put to it, serve as a powerful engine for those who wanted to see the end of monarchy and the component nations go their separate ways.

The books under review are not collections that one reads in rapt enthrallment from cover to cover; nor were they meant to be. This is a compilation of monographic essays serving as chapters in the books; each can be read independently and profitably. With the excellently drawn introductions to each part, readers have a frame of reference in which they may comfortably pursue subjects of their own special interest, and delve into the many details, differentiations, comparisons, evaluations, and quantifications gleaned from individual chapters. There is a nearly encyclopedic mass of material available, but it is presented in a form that is convenient to compass. In addition to their especial knowledge in the subjects, the authors also offer viewpoints from very broad perspectives, reflecting their diverse backgrounds, experience, and age. Their birthdates range from 1927 to 1967. Their nets of study are widely cast in the social sciences and humanities. In nationality, they hale from North America, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and from all the states that fell heir

to parts of the dissolved monarchy.

Despite their varied backgrounds and experiences, the work does not suffer from the discordance sometimes found in publications of such a company of writers. It is evident that the editors set clear guides and goals, but the tenor of the authors' works piques no suspicion of their having been under chafing constraints. The very nature of the subjects leads to spontaneous coherence in the narratives. The processes of organizing, sustaining, and directing the activities of an association, or of founding, enlarging, and wielding the powers of a publication, will have common characteristics wherever they take place. Where there are variations in those processes, they can be recounted and evaluated without disconcerting departures from the sequence and tone of the accompanying chapters. If the texts of these two books cannot be completely seamless garments, the seams are, nevertheless, very neatly sewn and the patterns of the materials are quite harmonious.

One cannot expect works by so many hands to be written in uniformly graceful prose, but these authors have produced a work of more than passable quality. Astute editorial guidance, customary in this series, likely accounts for part of that quality. It is interesting that the native German speakers take more casual liberties with the language than the other authors. To wit, it is a little startling to find, in so august a publication, phrases such as "im Kontext boomender Pressefreiheit" (p. 1719) and "ein erfolgreiches Comeback auf dem Zeitungsmarkt" (p. 1853). Granted, German has become a language almost as inviting to foreign imports as English, but such recent adoptions from vernacular English disturb the rhythm of a sentence in German. If there is some of the new, there is also some of the old. Presumably to maintain uniformity throughout the series, which was begun long before the reforms in German took effect, the editors are keeping to the old orthography; a *sharfes* "s" is still used to spell "dass." Finally, in matters of form and style, it is more than a small pleasure to read pages whereupon all the words that require diacritical marks have them appropriately placed.

In a work as massive as this, to be used for reference as much as to be read, it is important that there be aids to ease the use of it. Here, the need is generously met, a standard quality of the series. There is a list of abbreviations with their meaning (especially needful where so many are employed). Next, there is a listing of the 68 tables that provide useful summary to a great number of subjects treated in the text. One of the tables,

Dokumentation der Tagespresse der Habsburgermonarchie, runs 46 pages and lists the titles, places, dates, and languages of publication, days of issue per week, and circulation of all the periodicals. There is a very rich bibliography of 196 pages that includes the most recent as well as older material, ranging broadly in language and provenance. The index of persons includes every individual mentioned, including many whose names appear only once. The index of cities and towns, arranged alphabetically (even Chicago gets notice here!), gives both German and contemporary local spellings, where appropriate, with all of them cross-listed so that a place can be found by using either name. There follows an index of organizations, their locations noted, and a list of newspapers and journals with places of publication. There is a very thorough subject index, so thorough that "*Kanada*" is cited, although the name appears only once, in a table. Even the word "*Winkelpresse*" wins a listing for its single appearance. The book closes with brief, interesting, and useful curricula vitae of the contributing authors (unfortunately, one of them, Emanuel Turczynski, died before the date of publication and does not appear in the biographical sketches of the authors).

The great deal of information, on two very significant subjects, presented so logically and readably, will make this work attractive and useful to a wide variety of readers. It has a rich lode for those interested in why and how people organize themselves into associations and what their relationship to civil authority may be. The establishment and role of the press and the issues of its freedom and its influence are always compelling subjects, and, in this case, especially for those who are engaged in study of Austria and central Europe. The urges that set in motion a many-faceted conglomerate of people to make themselves into a modern society with modern government and administration will be grist for the mills of a good number of readers. This study has the happy characteristic that it will be of use to specialists in specific areas of the monarchy as well as to those who are interested in comparing the differing areas of the monarchy with others or with the whole. Those still caught up in study of the long-abiding, complex, often intractable problems of nationalism will find much to consider in this treatise on associations and the press. Reading this volume of two husky parts may even be a rather seductive experience for those who are unfamiliar with the complexities of the history of the monarchy; they might be misled to think that they have read all that is to be said on the subjects after these authors' reports. Finally, all who are generally interested in Austria and central Eu-

rope will join in offering thanks to the editors, authors, and publisher for having produced yet another boon to scholarship on the Habsburg Monarchy.

Note

[1]. Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch, eds., *Die Habsburgermonarchie, 1848-1918*, vol. 7, *Verfassung und Parlamentarismus*, pt. 1, *Verfassungsrecht, Verfassungswirklichkeit, Zentrale Repraesentativkoerperschaften*

(Vienna: Verlag der Oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000); and Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch, eds., *Die Habsburgermonarchie, 1848-1918*, vol. 7, *Verfassung und Parlamentarismus*, pt. 2, *Die Regionalen Repraesentativkoerperschaften* (Vienna: Verlag der Oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000). The HABSBUrg review of volume 7 can be read at <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?~path=119531016569864>.

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