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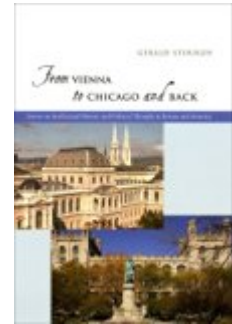
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Gerald Stourzh. *From Vienna to Chicago and Back: Essays on intellectual history and political thought in Europe and America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. 396 S. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-226-77636-1.

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Traces of a Postwar Austrian Historian

Gerald Stourzh, professor of modern history at Vienna University from 1969 until his retirement in 1997, is a familiar name to scholars of the Habsburg Monarchy and its successor states. His monographs on the nationality struggle in the late Habsburg Monarchy and the genesis of the Austrian State Treaty (*Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten in der Verfassung und Verwaltung Oesterreichs 1848-1918* [1985] and *Um Einheit und Freiheit. Staatsvertrag, Neutralität und das Ende der Ost-West-Besetzung Oesterreichs 1945-1955* [2005]) are meticulously researched and occupy central positions in their respective historiographies. Paradoxically, his English-language work, including articles and books on English and American history, is probably less well known. This collection of Stourzh's English-language essays invites reflections on the shape of his career and the unity of his work.[1]

At first glance, the essays seem impressively and incredibly diverse. Beginning with Benjamin Franklin and ending with Albert Camus, via William Blackstone, Charles Beard, Max Diamant, Gustav Mahler, Karl Kraus, and Alexis de Tocqueville, from seventeenth-century English and American political theory to the judicial courts of imperial Vienna, from the details of the 1909/1910 national compromise in the Bukovina to the political machinations leading to Austria's State Treaty of 1955, Stourzh's range and craftsmanship inspire admiration. Significantly, there are two forewords to this volume. One is from the distinguished historian of colonial and

revolutionary America, Bernhard Bailyn (who praises Stourzh's scholarship as exemplary), and the other from John Boyer, the indefatigable chronicler of the Christian Social Party in imperial Vienna.

Yet, from the disparate essays, common themes and preoccupations emerge over the course of the book. First, there is his interest in the relation between political thought and concrete action, particularly with respect to the making and interpreting of constitutions. In his foreword, Boyer highlights Stourzh's "interest in how politics shapes constitutions and how constitutions shape politics" (p. xii). Stourzh has written on the intellectual and political backgrounds to the American Constitution (1787), the 1867 *Ausgleich* in the Habsburg Monarchy, and the 1955 Austrian State Treaty.[2] His methodology often stresses the languages of politics, reflecting his association with J. G. A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner's "Cambridge School of Political Thought." Stourzh's chapter on the changing meanings of "constitution" in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thought is a good example of this approach. Indeed, legal and political thinking, especially in seventeenth-century England and eighteenth-century America, looms large in Stourzh's work.

These interests are evident from the beginning of Stourzh's career. In his first book entitled *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy* (1954), Stourzh began with a bald statement: "The fundamental problem

of politics is the problem of coercion” (quoted on p. 7). Writing as an Austrian in the shadow of WWII, he asserted that “civilized man has yearned for a time when cooperation rather than competition, love rather than fear and hatred, generosity rather than egotism, mercy rather than retaliation, and enlightened reason rather than selfish passion would govern the affairs of humanity” (quoted on p. 7). Throughout Stourzh’s work, whether in Anglo-American or Central European history, the tensions between idealism and reality are ever present. Significantly, his early monograph on Franklin is often mentioned in his illuminating autobiographical introduction “Traces of an Intellectual Journey.”

The second major theme of the book is what Stourzh calls, in homage to his friend Pocock, the “Tocquevilian moment of Western history.” Stourzh views modern Western history as the on-going, great transition from “aristocratic societies to democratic ones” or “the replacement of the paradigm of a graded society by the paradigm of equal rights for all human beings” (pp. 302, 25). Stourzh’s essays on English and American legal and political thinking focus on the emergence of a “Culture of Rights” (chapter 13) and the “Breakthrough of the Modern Liberal State” (chapter 12). Similarly, his groundbreaking work on the Habsburg Monarchy should be viewed in the wider context of the gradual, complex, and problematic move to modern democracy in America and Europe.

Thus, Stourzh’s focus is unapologetically on politics. In his autobiographical introduction, he attributes this to his upbringing in the Vienna of the 1930s and 1940s. He writes, “My lifelong interest in public affairs, political history, in constitutional history and the history of political thought as well as in the history of international relations, closely tied to interest in the fields of public law and political science, is rooted in my early experience of the *primacy of politics*” (my italics, p. 3). A recent review on H-German has highlighted this “old-fashioned” focus on politics, though Stourzh’s final chapter on Camus attests to his awareness of literature as a reflection of the human condition.[3] While Stourzh’s literary criticism may not be sparkling, it demonstrates his probing intelligence and range of reference.

Apart from his childhood in Vienna, it was the move to Chicago in 1951 at the behest of Hans Morgenthau that most influenced Stourzh’s career. It had, he states, “a decisive impact on my entire future life” (p. 1). At the age of twenty-two, Stourzh arrived at the University of Chicago with a solid continental education and aca-

demical experiences in England and France behind him. This “western orientation” is evident in many of these essays, both in their subject matter and their methodology. In Chicago, Stourzh participated in a glorious period of academic achievement. He occasionally house-sat for Friedrich von Hayek (perhaps Viennese connections opened the door there), attended Leo Strauss’s seminars, and moved within Morgenthau’s circle. He also interested himself in American history.

The first section of the book, containing four essays, is on Anglo-American history. The first, on Franklin’s political thought, challenges the facile placement of Franklin within the mainstream of Enlightenment thought. Stourzh persuasively argues that Franklin’s ambivalent view of human nature—in particular, his acknowledgement of such vices as pride, power, and ambition—tempered any tendencies from prevailing late Enlightenment belief in progress and perfectibility. In the final section of the essay, Stourzh turns to a theme that Franklin grappled with but did not resolve: “the basic antithesis of [Franklin’s] political thought: Power versus Equality” (p. 57). This antithesis also preoccupies Stourzh’s works.

The next essay, on Blackstone’s influence in America, focuses on the cross-fertilization of ideas in the eighteenth century and the unintended consequences. Blackstone’s conservative English legal and political arguments, particularly of the Glorious Revolution, were used in America for revolutionary purposes. Stourzh’s use of the linguistic method to uncover the languages of politics is particularly evident in this and the following essay. In chapter 3, Stourzh traces the use of such key words as “polity” and “government” (often stemming from translations of Aristotle’s *Politics*) to illuminate the gradual emergence of “constitution” as a political term in the eighteenth century. The importance of American developments, Stourzh argues, was to place the constitution as the paramount law.

The essay on Beard closes this section and appears somewhat detached, since it deals with the early to mid-twentieth century. Stourzh plots Beard’s attitudes toward American foreign policy, in particular Beard’s move from economic optimism in the years around WWI to isolationist realism in the later Theodore Roosevelt years. This shift can partly be explained by “political man” slowly taking precedence over “economic man” in Beard’s thinking.

The second section of the book will be of most interest to readers of HABSBERG. Stourzh’s essay on the

multinational empire, based on the Robert Kann memorial lecture of 1989, appeared first in the *Austrian History Yearbook* (1992) and will be familiar to many.[4] While he touches on the familiar glories of Vienna 1900, emphasizing the multinational setting, Stourzh's interest lies in political history and institutional structure. Thus, when discussing Sigmund Freud's famous dream of encountering the conservative Minister President Franz Anton Thun at *Westbahnhof*, Stourzh prefers to follow the statesman to his meeting in Ischl with the emperor, rather than with Freud back to the Berggasse. Thun was trying to pick up the pieces after the 1897 Badeni disturbances; the first item on the agenda was the *Ausgleich* renewal with Hungary. For Stourzh, these seemingly arcane, forgotten negotiations, however, form the necessary background to the well-known cultural achievements of Vienna 1900 since, as he asserts, "the recovery of half-forgotten details of institutional and legal history may help one to grasp the realities of social history in the fin-de-siecle Habsburg Empire" (p. 145).

The gradual domination of ethnicity in the political and institutional life of the late Habsburg Monarchy is central to Stourzh's investigations of Habsburg history. His essay on ethnic attribution, which starts with the introduction of national curias for school boards in Bohemia in 1873 and focuses on the Moravian Compromise (1905), introduces some of the material previously used in his monograph on judicial and administrative decisions on the nationalities in the Habsburg Monarchy. Following the legal recognition of *Volksstaemme* in the 1867 constitution, individuals were increasingly viewed as part of ethnic groups and the difficult task of deciding unclear cases fell to the authorities. What began as recognition of national rights in 1867, then, in the interwar period, led tragically to discrimination on grounds of race, and hence the chapter subtitle "Good Intentions, Evil Consequences." In Stourzh's words, "the *Staatsbuerger* was about to give away to the *Volksbuerger*" (p. 176). Stourzh's essay, only a small part of his wider contribution to understanding the process of nationalization in the Habsburg Monarchy, focuses on the central administration and its institutions, rather than activists and their organizations.

This focus continues with his essay on the Bukovinan Compromise of 1909. Following in the footsteps of the more famous Moravian Compromise, the Bukovinan Compromise constructed a complex political and administrative apparatus in an attempt to placate the Ruthenian, Romanian, German, Polish, Hungarian, and Jewish populations of the region. Stourzh's essay explicates the

preconditions and political reasoning behind the compromise.

One issue to arise in the Bukovinan Compromise was the status of the Jews. In short, were they a nationality (and thus accorded national rights) or were they a religious community (and thus due rights as citizens but not as a national collective)? Stourzh's chapter on Diamant addresses this issue directly. Early in 1909, Diamant, a Jewish lawyer from Czernowitz, submitted to the authorities the proposed by-laws of a Jewish theater, not in any official languages, but in Yiddish and with Yiddish orthography. In the course of the subsequent legal case before the Imperial Court, there were arguments back and forth about the Jews as a nation, Yiddish as a language (or dialect), the effects of assimilation, the distinctiveness of Jewish culture, and so on. Diamant lost the case on two points: first, it was not for the court to create a new *Volksstam*, and, second, Yiddish was not the language of all the Jewish people (since Jews, depending on where they lived, spoke a variety of languages).

The difficult position of the Jews in the post-1867 Habsburg Monarchy forms the basis of Stourzh's next two chapters. The 1867 December Constitution achieved equal rights for citizens (including Jews, of course), created a judicial system to protect those rights, and held the promise of a meritocratic society open to all. As Stourzh points out, these achievements were mostly the work of the much maligned Austro-German liberals. They initiated the bundle of laws called the December Constitution, and over the next decade fought to build a judicial, administrative, and legislative framework around the constitution. For Stourzh and others, these achievements inaugurated the "golden years of Austro-Jewish history" (p. 211). Stourzh's discussion of the Vienna's Rabbi Adolf Jellinek emphasizes the compatibility between Judaism, liberalism, acculturation to German *Kultur*, and loyalty to the Austrian dynasty and state. One sign of the "golden years" was the strong presence of Jewish students in higher education (chronicled so well by Steven Beller). Another factor was the interrelated rise in conversion and mixed marriages.

Yet, in the modern world of equal rights and opportunities, national groupings slowly began to assume a central importance in political and social life. As already noted, Stourzh has plotted the administrative and institutional aspects of this move. Instead of citizens exercising and respecting each others' equal rights, the crises of the late monarchy pushed nationalism to extremes. The atmosphere became infused with fundamentalist biolog-

ical, pseudo-scientific, *voelkisch* discourse. What were Jews to do?

In chapter 10, Stourzh looks at two prominent figures: Mahler and Kraus. Both were at the height of their professions and both converted to Catholicism—Mahler in 1897, just prior to his appointment to the *Hofoper*, and Kraus in 1911, his reasons still shrouded in mystery. Kraus would subsequently leave the Church in a blaze of publicity in 1923. Stourzh investigates the background to the conversions and their respective views on the place of Jews in modern society.

The final essay in this section, like the one on Beard in the previous section, seems separate from the others. Stourzh looks at the conjuncture of circumstances that facilitated the Austrian State Treaty of 1955, in particular, the intricate diplomacy that eventually led to Austria's declaration of neutrality and the resulting withdrawal of foreign troops from its territory. His knowledge and insight in this field is evident; indeed his book on the state treaty is the standard work.

Part 3 sets Stourzh's historical investigation in the broader context of the "Tocquevillian Moment." Chapter 12 argues that the "breakthrough of the modern liberal state" was predicated on the "generalization and equalization of legal capacities" (p. 303). A new social language, incorporating such terms as "citizen," "liberty," and "equality," was formed at the end of the eighteenth century under the influence of Anglo-American thinking and the possibilities opened by the French Revolution. Stourzh recognizes that the very generality of liberal terms allowed and continues to allow for adaptability and interpretation, hence their ongoing relevance. Karl Renner is quoted by Stourzh, "Men are not equal by nature ... but the law makes them ... equal" (p. 300).

Stourzh's chapter on "Liberal Democracy as Culture of Rights" emphasizes the contribution of the English, American, and French traditions to the development of the culture of rights. Thus, according to Stourzh, in "17th and 18th century England, a process of 'fundamentalizing' the rights of persons took place.... England was different" (p. 308). America built on the English tradition, particularly in the areas of republican government, federalism, constitutional law, and the bill of rights. Finally, Stourzh uses the example of France as representative of the continental tradition based on Roman law and legislative sovereignty. These were three paths on the way to liberal democracy. But, the reader asks, what about the Habsburg Monarchy and Central Europe? It would have been instructive for Stourzh to link his research interests

and comment on the Austrian case.

Significantly, the last historical chapter is on Tocqueville. In Tocqueville's analysis Stourzh finds an unsurpassed account of the crucial change from a hierarchical, corporate society to a new fluid, individualistic, egalitarian democracy. Tocqueville not only discussed the socioeconomic implications of legal equality, but also recognized the protean power of "equality." Tocqueville's deep, balanced, clearheaded rendering of the historical forces behind the French Revolution and the developing American democracy led to an ambivalent overall judgment. For Tocqueville (and one suspects for Stourzh as well), there are no easy answers.

In conclusion, the handful of essays on the Habsburg Monarchy forms an indispensable adjunct to the standard accounts of post-1867 history. Their detailed focus on the constitutional, legal, administrative, and institutional history of the late imperial era provides a much needed supplement to more traditional nationalist and political narratives. The essays remain, however, occasional pieces from a master craftsman's table. Stourzh's German-language works on the Habsburg Monarchy constitute his main contribution, and I can only reiterate Hillel Kieval's call for an English translation of Stourzh's monograph on the equality of nationalities.[5] There are a few minor technical issues. First, the copyediting process could have been more rigorous. Second and more substantially, the essays have been published in their original form, with no updating to incorporate new developments in the historiography. This is not too serious for the pieces on the Habsburg Monarchy, but some of the essays on Anglo-American history were first published in the 1950s.

Nevertheless, the republication of the essays in book form can only be welcomed. In many respects, they form a unified view of American and European history over the last three centuries. Stourzh's project to write of the Tocquevillian moment in Western history, described as "unfinished business" in his autobiographical essay, unites his historical interests into an overarching synthesis (p. 25). It constitutes riches indeed.

Notes

[1]. As such, this volume forms a companion to his German-language collection of essays. Gerald Stourzh, *Wege zur Grundrechtsdemokratie. Studien zur Begriffs- und Institutionengeschichte des liberalen Verfassungsstaates* (Vienna and Cologne: Boehlau, 1989).

[2]. Unfortunately, no essay in this collection deals directly with the 1867 constitution. It does appear in Stourzh's work published in German. See Gerald Stourzh, "Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten und die österreichische Dezember-Verfassung von 1867," in *Der oesterreichisch-ungarische Ausgleich. Vorgeschichte und Wirkungen*, ed. Peter Berger (Vienna: Herold, 1967), 186-218; and Gerald Stourzh, "Die Oesterreichische Verfassung von 1867," *Oesterreich in Geschichte und Literatur* 12 (1968): 1-16. See also Gerald Stourzh, "Der Dualismus 1867 bis 1918: Zur staatsrechtlichen und völkerrechtlichen Problematik der Doppelmonarchie," in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848, Vol. 7: Verfassung und Parlamentarismus*, ed. Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna: Verlag der Oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), 1177-1230. This volume of

the series *Die Habsburgermonarchie* was dedicated to Stourzh.

[3]. Richard Schaefer, review of *From Vienna to Chicago and Back: Essays on Intellectual History and Political Thought in Europe and America*, by Gerald Stourzh, H-Net Reviews (March 2008), <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=14336>.

[4]. Gerald Stourzh, "The Multinational Empire Revisited: Reflections on Late Imperial Austria," *Austrian History Yearbook* 23 (1992): 1-22.

[5]. Hillel Kieval, review of *Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten in der Verfassung und Verwaltung Oesterreichs 1848-1918*, by Gerald Stourzh, *Journal of Modern History* 64, no. 1 (1992): 177-80.

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