



Horst Haselsteiner. *Bosnien-Hercegovina: Orientkrise und Südslavische Frage*. Wien und Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1996. 185 pp. DM 58,00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-205-98376-7.

Reviewed by Kenneth W. Rock (Colorado State University)

Published on HABSBUURG (October, 1998)

Deja-vu: Bosnia, the Eastern Crisis, and the Southern Slav Question Revisited

This volume of fourteen essays, previously published between 1970 and 1994 in Austria, Yugoslavia, and Bosnia-Hercegovina, combines the research of Austrian historian Horst Haselsteiner's thirty-year inquiry into the Habsburg Monarchy's encounter with Bosnia-Hercegovina, the Eastern Crisis, and the Southern Slav Question. The author analyzes issues of constitutional law, institutional reform, nationalism, modernization, and the influence of newspapers, parliament, and experts upon the elites who made Austria-Hungary's policy decisions between 1867 and 1918. Reflecting backward from the late twentieth century, Haselsteiner emphasizes the continuities and discontinuities of policy formulation and the course of events, the solutions proposed as well as the seeming impossibility of mastering Balkan dilemmas. The book makes accessible several difficult to obtain essays, illuminates the complexity of Balkan issues, and reminds readers of long-standing Balkan challenges.

Varying from six to twenty-five pages in length and arranged chronologically, these essays are neither a history of the Southern Slav Question nor of Bosnia-Hercegovina. Although some topics overlap, there are gaps. There is nothing, for example, on events between 1880 through 1903, nor about the Balkan Wars. Intended neither for undergraduates nor for the general public, the book assumes a scholar's familiarity with the topics.[1] There are indexes of persons and places, but no bibliography, although citations from historiographical literature, Austrian, Hungarian, and Bosnian archival sources, newspapers, and statistical tables abound in the footnotes. A detailed map would have been useful, given the

precision of the text.

The essays are methodologically similar. The author frames the problem, poses questions, analyzes specific documents, and offers a brief conclusion or allows the reader to draw his own. The inquiries clarify how key Austro-Hungarian decisions were made by an elite, the final authority resting with the emperor, and illustrate that public opinion in the Monarchy, although considered, remained peripheral to the decision-making process. The views of foreign governments and media, however, proved more influential in shaping Habsburg policy. The essays reiterate the author's thesis that all attempts to ameliorate the Balkan imbroglio, imperial or ethno-national, sought primarily to secure particular interests rather than to achieve genuine conflict resolution.

Essay one introduces four basic principles which Haselsteiner suggests demonstrate continuity in Habsburg Eastern policy from 1699 to 1914. These factors, which provide an infrastructure for several studies, are (a) the foreign policy decision-making process, (b) attitudes toward the Ottoman Empire, (c) relations with Russia, and (d) economic considerations. Vienna consistently viewed the Balkan "peasants" and their states as policy objects, regarded the Balkans as a field for expansion, as a natural market, and as a region to demonstrate the Monarchy's prestige. >From 1710 onward Vienna mistrusted Russian intervention in Southeastern Europe.

Three essays examine the 1870s Eastern Crisis. After 1872 Foreign Minister Count Julius Andrassy abandoned Vienna's traditional policy of non-encroachment, based

on historic rights and Turkey's "providential usefulness" to the Dual Monarchy, to coordinate Habsburg political goals with military power. Since the Ottoman Empire no longer guaranteed stability in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Austria-Hungary henceforth would press its claims for "the natural hinterland of our Dalmatian coast" where border rectification was "desirable... This goal is acknowledged to be correct; it is only a question of when and how it can be achieved." [2] Andrassy cautioned that Austria-Hungary must address rivalry with Russia in future policy deliberations and proposed an alliance with the German Empire, but discounted an Austro-Russian war as "premature." The prospect of a potential clash with Russia led to vacillation about the moment, method, and extent of Habsburg action.

In 1876 Andrassy called upon Turkey and Europe to enact reforms beneficial to Bosnian Christians, thereby demonstrating Austria-Hungary's status as a great power and good neighbor. This project failed since the Ottoman government, the indigenous Muslim population, and the insurrectionaries all resisted reforms. Bosnian refugees refused to return home unless Austro-Hungarian troops accompanied them. Furthermore, Slavic Austro-Hungarian authorities, from Dalmatia's governor to military and customs officials, ensured that arms, ammunition, and recruits reached their friends across the border. Insurrections, Haselsteiner notes, engender their own dynamic that outside powers cannot control despite their programs and pronouncements. This proved as true in the 1870s as in the 1990s. Behind the humanitarian facade lay Andrassy's goals of Habsburg expansion and preventing Serbia or Russia from dominating the region.

Armed with the 1878 Congress of Berlin's pacification mandate, Austro-Hungarian troops occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina. Examining "echoes of the occupation" in the German-speaking press, Haselsteiner stresses the "pluralistic" character of the Monarchy's public opinion via quotations from government-inspired and from liberal, democratic, and national opposition newspapers. The press welcomed Europe's endorsement of Austria-Hungary's "civilizing mission," acknowledged that occupation enhanced the Monarchy's prestige, advanced its strategic and economic interests, and prevented the "enemy" from acquiring adjacent territory. Vienna's *Neue Freie Presse*, however, criticized Austria's "sense of mission" and foresaw a long and costly pacification process, characterized by native resistance, religious fanaticism, and xenophobia. Although most journalistic "echoes" were positive, Haselsteiner argues that public opinion

played a peripheral role since Habsburg policy formulation remained the ruler's prerogative.

The creation of a school system consonant with the Dual Monarchy's "civilizing mission" proved difficult for successive Bosnian governors and Austro-Hungarian common Ministers of Finance until 1918. Two overlapping essays on pedagogical policy analyze the protracted struggle after 1878 to secure a provincial school superintendent and the prolonged formulation of an appropriate educational statute. Despite Professor Lukas Zore's two-month appointment as *Schulreferent* in late 1879, the position remained vacant until 1881, reflecting the myriad educational realities in the occupied provinces.

A second essay on education provides statistical data that Austro-Hungarian authorities assembled in 1889-1881 in their initial endeavors at educational reform. The Ottoman legacy was 645 elementary schools, 110 of which were Christian, although 80% of school-age children were absentees. Before a provincial educational statute emerged in the mid-1880s, the administration established "interconfessional" elementary schools, whose instructors were primarily non-commissioned Southern Slav military officers. Despite serious efforts to develop elementary, secondary, and technical schools, indigenous acceptance of the new educational system lagged behind officials' expectations. Educational modernization in the occupied provinces, Haselsteiner concludes, faced "monstrous" difficulties.

A long and more provocative essay critiques two field reports by *Feldmarschalleutnant* Moritz von Auffenberg, Inspector-General of Officers' Schools and later Minister of War, to ascertain precisely what the Dual Monarchy's leaders knew about Bosnia-Herzegovina's internal conditions in 1908-1909. Auffenberg was regarded as an "expert in South Slavic affairs." His service in Zagreb made him familiar with Catholic and Croatian political leaders, while his tours of Bosnia and military patriotism prompted his call for Austria-Hungary decisively to demonstrate its power.

Auffenberg believed Bosnia was more tense in 1908 than at any time since 1881-82, and he blamed Hungary's Serbs and "opposition newspapers" for disseminating treasonable propaganda. He found provincial administrators "deeply insecure," asking "if the whole thing [Austrian rule] will last," and criticized the bickering military and civilian hierarchy. Auffenberg personally welcomed annexation, although he argued that Bosnia's annexation be viewed in context with Croatia-Slavonia, as a step towards Trialism, and ultimately a federalized

Gesamtmonarchie. He recommended the appointment of an energetic governor well-versed in the local language, an autonomous Diet, a strong gendarmerie, and credit to finance agrarian and commercial development, but acknowledged that solving these problems will constitute for the Monarchy “an extremely dangerous reef.” Citing the “unifying military spirit of the old k.u.k. Army,” Auffenberg urged decisive action for “a great power cannot long tolerate itself to be humiliated and provoked.” Auffenberg’s memoranda, which reached War Minister Franz Schoenaich, General Staff Chief Franz Conrad von Hoetzendorf, Foreign Minister Aloys von Aehrenthal, and Emperor Franz Joseph, vividly illuminate the nature of privileged information Vienna’s elite possessed at the moment of Bosnia’s annexation.

Haselsteiner provides another example of how Vienna’s elite used its intelligence about Bosnia: the role played by Lieutenant Georg Sertic in the Banja Luka treason trials of 1915-16. Due to the Lieutenant’s reputation for reliability and the evidence of a captured diary he had obtained, 151 pro-Serbian spies were brought to trial. His exposure of a spy network established by the *Rayoninspector* Kosta Todorovic of Loznica, with links to *Narodna obrana* and Serbian military intelligence, heightened anti-Serb sentiment throughout the Monarchy. Although Haselsteiner draws no conclusions, he informs the reader that the trial resulted in only 16 death sentences and 53 acquittals.

Three essays address the Southern Slav Question, not in Bosnia, but by exploring the constitutional status of Hungary’s Serbs, their response to the 1867 Compromise, and their educational progress and national identity. After the abolition of the Vojvodina in 1860, Serb deputies in the Hungarian Diet advocated a federalized Habsburg Monarchy providing “justice and brotherhood” through “legal dualism and national pluralism.” The Diet’s Magyar majority, however, demanded restoration of the 1848 March constitution without amendment, embraced Ferenc Deak’s program of one “political Hungarian nation” within St. Stephen’s crownlands, and insisted that other issues be regulated internally and subsequently rather than negotiated as constitutional law. The Serbs denounced this Magyar position and spoke of a German-Magyar alliance against all Slavs. Such polemics prevented a resolution of national issues before the 1867 *Ausgleich* and ultimately affirmed the argument, which Haselsteiner endorses, that Hungary’s and the Habsburgs’ fate rested upon Slavic good will.

Divided between Djordje Stratimirovic’s Conserva-

tives and Svetozar Milicic’s National Liberals, Serb attempts to secure autonomy after 1867 collided with Magyar insistence that only “one Hungarian political nation” could guarantee Danubian freedoms. Hungary’s Slav’s maneuvered between the “two fires” of Vienna and Budapest seeking “to be warmed but not burned.” The Croats, stronger economically, legally, and historically, negotiated “sub-dualism” with the Magyars, while the weaker Serbs achieved neither autonomy nor equality. Since each group envisioned its identity within its own state as predestined, and since neither *Ausgleich*, nor sub-dualism, nor inequality proved sufficient, both Serbs and Croats sought alternatives. Haselsteiner cites Robert A. Kann: “Yet, taking the complexity of the empire’s social structure, there generally was no right course but only a choice between greater and lesser evils.”[3]

Using the 1910 Austro-Hungarian census and statistical data, Haselsteiner stresses that although the Serbs were only 5.3 per cent of Hungary’s population, and were under represented in all categories of the Magyar-dominated school system, the Serbs (and Romanians) – in contrast to the Slovaks, Germans, and Ruthenes – steadfastly resisted Magyarization. Not only did the Serbs hold their own, from 1900-1914 they increased their rate of literacy, their national consciousness, and ratio of participation in elementary, *Mittel-*, and vocational schools while remaining staunchly immune to Magyar assimilation pressures.

Two essays clarify the 1914 July crisis. After the Sarajevo assassination, Hungary’s prime minister Count Stephen Tisza initially opposed energetic action against Serbia, yet between July 10-19 he adhered to the Vienna *Ministerrat* majority which sanctioned the ultimatum to Belgrade. Haselsteiner submits that Tisza had a number of reasons to alter course, but demands for action in the Budapest parliament by opposition delegates who presumed Serbia’s guilt, played a “rather negligible role” in Tisza’s endorsing steps against Serbia. On 24 July Tisza affirmed, to applause, that although the Monarchy desired peace it was now taking portentous measures.

On 25 July, the day Austria-Hungary’s minister left Belgrade, Serbian Army Chief of Staff Radomir Putnik concluded his summer cure and left Styria via Budapest for Belgrade. Tisza wired the *Ballhausplatz* that the Fourth Army Corps commander would apprehend Putnik if the Serbian reply proved unsatisfactory. The general was, in fact, detained on 25 July at 10:00 p. m. and interned in Budapest’s Military Casino. The “Putnik Affair” sparked a lively outburst in the domestic and for-

eign press, but ended on 26 July when Vienna released Putnik and dispatched him by special train to Orsova to recross the Danube. Foreign Minister Count Leopold Berchtold informed London that Vienna had been justified in detaining Putnik, but had released him “since the Austro-Hungarian Army was far too chivalrous to rob the Serbian Army of its commander-in-chief.” In reality, Franz Joseph, gallantly if anachronistically, had ordered War Minister Alexander von Krobatin to inform the officials responsible of “My fullest disapproval.” How telling for Habsburg decision-making as the twentieth century’s first global bloodbath commenced!

A final essay compares Southeast European federation schemes: Ilija Garasanin’s 1844 *nacertanije* and Louis Kossuth’s 1862 “Danube Federation.” Inspired by Polish Prince Adam Czartoryski, French Alexis de Tocqueville, and Czech Frantisek Zach, Garasanin secretly proposed that Serbia’s Prince Alexander Karadjordjevic reestablish Stefan Dusan’s empire ephemeral since Kosovo in 1389. Published only in 1906, Garasanin’s “Greater Serbian” program decisively influenced Serbian policy since it foresaw the Ottoman Empire’s collapse, viewed the Habsburg Monarchy as a “constant, irreconcilable opponent,” and stressed Serb leadership of a Southern Slav “federative alliance” with access to the Adriatic Sea. In exile after 1849 Kossuth considered “confederation” proposals with Italian, Romanian, Polish, and Serbian nationalists. His 1862 project, which envisioned a Magyar-dominated *Staatenbund*, proved as illusory as had earlier versions since non-Magyar, Hungarian exile, and Budapest liberal reactions were universally negative.

Haselsteiner concludes, as have others, that because of Southeast Europe’s multiethnic society meaningful solutions to its questions were supremely difficult. Federations were designed to protect small peoples against neighboring great powers. Eager to be seen as “progressive” and “democratic,” all ethnic leaders nonetheless sought primarily to achieve the maximum aspirations, claims, and security for their own politico-national-ethnic state. National self-interest prompted utopian visions, but the initial euphoria that characterized them ended in disillusion. Nationalism and federalism proved mutually exclusive, as do thesis and antithesis, hence no synthesis was ever realized. Genuine constitutional re-

form in Southeast Europe was either utopian or nationalist, and national divisiveness proved stronger.

One finishes a reading of this book much more knowledgeable about the complexity of the problems that characterized Austria-Hungary’s encounters with the Balkans during the last fifty years before the Empire’s collapse. Haselsteiner’s selected analyses of Habsburg decision-making, of the Eastern Question, the Southern Slav question, and the contentiousness and complexity of rival claims are flavorful, richly-detailed, and provide fresh insights into attitudes, incidents, and personalities on all sides. Yet, ironically, the essays also leave one with a sense of *deja vu*.

Notes:

[1]. For background reading see Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (Washington Square, New York: New York University Press, 1994); Robert J. Donia and John V. A. Fine, Jr. *Bosnia and Hercegovina: A Tradition Betrayed* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Franz-Josef Kos, *Die Politik Oesterreich-Ungarns waehrend der Orientkrise 1874/75-1879* (Vienna: Boehlau Verlag, 1984); Katrin Boeckh, *Von den Balkan zum Ersten Weltkrieg: Kleinstaatenpolitik und ethnische Selbstbestimmung auf dem Balkan* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1996); and Samuel R. Williamson, Jr. *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991). All but the Kos and Williamson books have been reviewed on HABSBERG.

[2]. *Geheimkonferenz* Protocol of 29 January 1875.

[3]. Robert A. Kann, “The Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 in Retrospect: Causes and Effect,” p. 42, in *Der oesterreichische-ungarische Ausgleich 1867, Materialien (Referate und Diskussionen) der internationalen Konferenz in Bratislava 28.8.-1.9.1967* edited by L’udovit Holotik (Bratislava: Verlag der Slowakischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1971).

Copyright (c) 1998 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to the reviewer and to HABSBERG. For other permission, please contact <reviews@h-net.msu.edu>.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/habsburg>

Citation: Kenneth W. Rock. Review of Haselsteiner, Horst, *Bosnien-Hercegovina: Orientkrise und SÖ¼dslavische*

Frage. HABSBURG, H-Net Reviews. October, 1998.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=2402>

Copyright © 1998 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.