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Richard Voithofer. *Drum schliesst Euch frisch an Deutschland an ...: die Grossdeutsche Volkspartei in Salzburg 1920-1936.* Wien: Böhlau, 2000. 485 pp. ISBN 978-3-205-99222-6.

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The one thing that is misleading about Voithofer's book is the title: This is not a book about the inter-war Anschluss movement. Even the dates given are only formally correct because the story actually starts in 1918 and the party effectively folded up in 1932, already. Having said that, this Salzburg thesis, supervised by Ernst Hanisch - easily the most perceptive and thought-provoking of Austria's *Zeitgeschichtler* - is a rare example of both breadth and thoroughness of research.

The *Grossdeutsche Volkspartei*, successor to the dominant *Nationalverband* of the monarchy and predecessor to the FPOe of the Second Republic, was a short-lived phenomenum. It only came into being two years later than her rivals and it collapsed two years before parties were formally outlawed in 1934. The party's genesis has often been written off as a chaos of seventeen splinter groups. Voithofer's achievements is to follow closely the process that lead to the re-formation of the *Deutschfreiheitliche* camp in Salzburg. It pitted staid, old-style crypto-monarchist groups like the *Buergerklub* of mayor Franz Ott against angry young men of republican persuasions who accused the old guard of mis-management if not worse (with food shortages prominent on their list of grievances). Pan-German (*alldeutsch*) followers of Schoenerer who had consistently denounced the Habsburg Empire enjoyed a brief moment of grim satisfaction and played an unpredictable part in the internal wrangles of the *Deutschfreiheitliche*.

1919 had been a year of chaos, with several lists competing during the series of elections that heralded the start of the "First Republic". Aparently, these woeful experiences at least served to concentrate minds wonderfully: The *Grossdeutsche Volkspartei* that actually held its founding convention in Salzburg managed to get its act together in time for the General election in the fall of 1920. The party did not always fully realize its pre-war potential that had made it the dominant party in the town of Salzburg. But they still occupied a pivotal part in city politics and successfully played off "Reds" against "Blacks". In 1927, Ott even managed to reclaim the mayoralty and hang on to it until 1935.

The *Grossdeutsche Volkspartei* did not have a big following in the rural parts of the country: The *Landbund* that took care of that part of the electorate in Carinthia or Styria was too weak to stand on its own feet yet unwilling to follow in the wake of urban elites. On the other hand, Salzburg was a stronghold of the pre-Hitler National Socialist Party that constantly outflanked the *Grossdeutsche* on the left, yet still managed to run on a joint ticket with the Christian Socials in the provincial elections of 1922. One year later, Hitler wanted the Austrian National Socialists to boycott the general elections. This lead to a split among the Austrian National Socialists and persuaded their Salzburg branch -including their trade-union leader Hans Prodinger - to draw closer to the *Grossdeutsche Volkspartei*.

Partly as a result, the Salzburg *Grossdeutsche* increasingly voiced the dissatisfaction of white-collar workers and civil servants with the strict austerity policies of the Seipel government in Vienna they had originally welcomed in 1922. In turn, business groups did not take kindly to the left-ward drift of the party: In 1927 the *Grossdeutsche* faced a spoiler's list of disaffected shopkeepers lead by a former member of the imperial parliament, Anton Hueber. The *Ha-Ge-Bund* (the association of the old middle-classes that started from an anti-clerical bias everywhere else) actually went so far as to openly support the Christian Socials in 1932. So did Heinrich Clessin the long-time chairman of the Salzburg *Grossdeutsche* - and top-civil servant of the city of Salzburg.

The party still managed to win more than 30% of the vote in the city in the General election of 1930 (12% in the province); but in the spring of 1932 it was down to less than 5% (or 2% in the province). There was an unmistakeable link between the Great depression and the rise of Nazism. Anti-clerical middle class groups everywhere (like the DVP and DDP of the Weimar Republic) were gobbled up by Hitler's catch-all movement.

However, Voithofer has managed to give a new twist to an old story by feeding his data into a computer and producing a tentative analysis of voting behaviour (pp. 453-63). The result is maybe not that surprising. The category that tends to get overlooked when simply looking at percentages won and lost, is that potential majority party, the non-voters. Of the 90% of their voters the *Grossdeutsche* did lose within a year and a half, roughly half are likely to have joined the Nazis; a quarter did not vote at all; almost a fifth fell for the Christian Socials. (This was a development that found few parallels in the rest of Austria where such groups maybe joined the *Heimwehr* but not the "blacks".) In turn, the Nazis got less than a third of their vote from the *Grossdeutsche*, a fourth from the non-voters, a few percent from the Socialists and none from the Christian Socials. (Again, it needs to be emphasized, figures for Vienna would probably be different -but then, somebody should just repeat the exercise with the material available for the capital.)

After their defeat at the polls in early 1932, the Salzburg branch of the party slowly folded up. A few of its younger activists joined the Nazis, others of their former standard bearers (including Ott and Prodinger) continued in office during the Dollfuss dictatorship. In the fall of 1932 the Vorarlberg branch of the party managed to win re-election to the regional diet; the Upper Austrian leader of the federal party, Hermann Foppa, still had fond thoughts of being able to find "a third way" between the government and the Nazis; but by then the Salzburg branch had long since ceased its activities. The empty shell of the association that took over when parties were generally outlawed in 1934, was finally dissolved in 1936. Their last party secretary opened a tea-shop in the party's former premises and married the typist (who was still around to grant Voithofer an interview - see p.126, note 14).

Fortunately, this is no attempt at *Vergangenheitsbewaeltigung*: Voithofer's book is not about

bewailing the hidebound ideology of our elders but about everyday politics at the grass-roots, warts and all - about wheeler-dealers, electoral pacts and voting behaviour. It does not purport to "deconstruct" party programmes or elaborate a sweeping thesis of what was wrong with democracy in the interwar period. Ideologues will probably be disappointed but historians should appreciate it.

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