



Peter Haslinger. *Hundert Jahre Nachbarschaft: Die Beziehungen zwischen Österreich und Ungarn, 1895-1994*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996. xvi + 395 pp. 98 DM (paper), ISBN 978-3-631-48951-2.

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## One Hundred Years of Austro-Hungarian Relations

Rather than a broad examination of Austro-Hungarian relations over the last one hundred years, Peter Haslinger has divided his study into three periods of focus, delineated by the “epochal watersheds of this century”: the First World War and the resulting dissolution of the multinational monarchies, the Second World War and the division of Europe, and the “implosion-like” dissolution of communist rule in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991. He then examines particular years from each era: 1895-1897, 1927-1931, and 1968-1975. The introductions to the second and third sections both provide useful overviews of the particular period under consideration; the conclusion considers developments after 1989.

Haslinger begins the first section with a review of Austro-Hungarian relations as laid out in the *Ausgleich* of 1867, followed by a brief discussion of the differing ways the Austrians and the Hungarians interpreted this agreement during the life of the Monarchy. The author then moves to the Millennium of 1896, which he designates both a cultural point of reference and a line of separation between Cisleithania and Transleithania. In 1896, Hungary’s future appeared closely connected with an accelerating, technical and intellectual, civilizing advance (p. 15). With the celebration of the Millennium, whose high point was a six month-long exhibition, Hungary sought to confirm its place among the “great nations” in the cultural development of the world. The exhibition was a success and the number of visitors, including Viennese, was high, despite Karl Lueger’s call for a boycott (Lueger’s lack of confirmation as mayor of Vienna in 1895-1896 is dealt with elsewhere in this section). Haslinger moves

to cultural developments in Budapest during this period: urban-architectural, musical, and theatrical. The Millennium did not, however, meet with unanimous support from all of the people of Transleithania, as the protests of Croatian students in Prague made clear.

In his discussion of Hungary and the Habsburgs, the author notes that 1896 was not only the year the foundation stone was laid for a memorial to Stephen I, the first Hungarian king; it was also the year that the famous monument of Maria Theresa was unveiled in Pozsony/Pressburg/Bratislava. Moreover, the third and fourth bridges across the Danube in Budapest were named for Emperor Francis Joseph and his consort, respectively, during 1896. Relations between the Hungarians and the Habsburgs were, however, more complicated than might appear, and Haslinger describes them admirably in a section on internal crises in Austria and Hungary and their effects on the “partner states” in the Dual Monarchy. The author then examines the economic *Ausgleich* negotiations during 1896-1897, concluding with a discussion of the foundering of the negotiations and a discussion of the Badeni Crisis of 1897.

The introduction of the second section provides an overview of Austro-Hungarian relations during the entire interwar period. Haslinger asserts that although the dissolution of constitutional-dynastic connections in autumn 1918 was unproblematic and Austria was one of only two states to recognize Bela Kun’s Hungarian Soviet Republic, relations between “Restoesterreich” and “Rumpfungarn” were not close, at least through the mid-1920s, due to the Burgenland issue and differing develop-

ment in internal politics. Hungary really did not break out of its diplomatic isolation until 1927, and developments in the bilateral relations of the two countries fell increasingly under the shadow of Adolf Hitler beginning 1933.

It is against this background that Haslinger discusses Austrian domestic politics and their effect on Austro-Hungarian relations, Austria's role in Hungarian foreign policy, the Burgenland, the development of Austro-Hungarian economic cooperation in general, and the effect of the worldwide economic crisis on it in particular. The author then looks at discussions of the common Austro-Hungarian cultural inheritance and the revival of the dualistic tradition in Austria during 1930-1931. In the context of Austro-Hungarian bilateral cultural relations, Haslinger also examines Hungarian institutional cultural-linguistic policies abroad, including the establishment of a network of Collegia Hungarica. He concludes with a discussion of the first steps toward Austrian-Hungarian-Italian cooperation.

The development of political relations between Austria and Hungary immediately after the Second World War was stymied primarily on foreign-political grounds, and bilateral relations stagnated between 1948 and 1956. The death of Stalin led to changes in the communist bloc and thereafter to improvement in Austro-Hungarian relations, particularly economic. And it was the particular Austrian brand of neutrality that the Hungarians sought to emulate when Imre Nagy announced Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact on 1 November 1956 (p. 242). Austria supported the UN resolution three days later calling for the removal of Soviet troops from Hungary. However, in secret meetings in early 1957, the leaders of both countries recognized the importance of normalizing relations between the two, something that occurred with amazing speed during the early 1960s.

Thus, there was already an economic point of departure for the intensifying Austro-Hungarian cooperation in 1968, which Hungary's participation in the occupation of Czechoslovakia interrupted. The events in Prague also damaged Austro-Hungarian cultural relations, causing the cancellation of Hungarian cultural events, including sports, throughout Austria for the rest of the year (pp. 264-66). Already in early 1969, there was preparation for rapprochement, in which the Austrian media played a role, and the years from 1969 and 1973 were ones of *Besuchsdiplomatie*. In addition, regional contacts and athletics were means that Austria and Hungary used between 1969 and 1976 to overcome the effects of the

Iron Curtain. Developments in cultural and academic spheres followed shortly thereafter. The Hungarian reform movement of 1968 was basically economic in nature, and very narrowly defined after the suppression of the Prague Spring.

There is a brief discussion in the conclusion of Austro-Hungarian relations from May 1988 on, when Austrian Foreign Minister Alois Mock was the first foreign politician to visit Budapest after the removal of long-time Communist strong man Janos Kadar, to 1995. The conclusion provides an excellent chronology of economic and political reform in Hungary from 1988 to 1995 and Austrian support for them.

The time span 1896 to 1995, from the Hungarian millennium (of the Magyars entering the Carpathian basin) to the Austrian millennium (the first written record of Austria) is an interesting premise, but this does not accurately indicate the scope of the book. The Hungarian millennium of 1896 works well because the book opens with a discussion of it, but the third section of the book really concludes with 1975.

This volume is history "from the top down"; it contains numerous names and dates, but very little evidence of the people who whole-heartedly supported improved bilateral relations during the past two decades. The author argues that the Austro-Hungarian relationship for the past few decades has been special, one of few European examples of bilateral relations driven not only from the top, but which had popular support from all levels of society. I would have liked to have seen more examples of this popular support. Although the book claims to examine cultural, economic, political, and social developments, its focus is primarily political-economic. Even the brief discussions of cultural aspects of the Austro-Hungarian relationship have, for the most part, a political-institutional focus.

The first section of the book, on the period when there was a clear Austro-Hungarian relationship delimited by the *Ausgleich*, makes compelling reading, not least because the cultural politics surrounding the celebration of the Millennium are tremendously interesting. The second section of the book is useful, because many foreign-political studies of the period focus on the bilateral relationships of particular countries in East Central Europe with Germany. In the conclusion, I personally would have liked to have seen more analysis of the Austro-Hungarian "special relationship," because it is not clear to me that its resurrection since 1989 was a foregone conclusion. This is not to denigrate the quality of the book; quite

the contrary: the author has raised issues that I would have liked him to expand upon. I found the introductions to the second and third parts useful, and they could be assigned to North American graduate students for courses on the twentieth-century political history of Habsburg Central Europe. Here, I should note that this entire volume would be a good candidate for a required text in an upper-level undergraduate course if it were available in English.

The author has employed a wide variety of primary sources in this volume, including materials from the major archives in both Austria and Hungary, as well as an impressive array of contemporary newspapers representing a plethora of political views. In addition, his vast

bibliography of secondary sources incorporates not only some of the most recent publications on the topic, but also standard works on the topic in English, German, and Magyar. Finally, although the book contains the standard German-style index, limited to registers of names and places, these are very complete, so it is very easy to find information, making this a good reference book, especially for recent political developments in Hungary.

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