



Andreas Moritsch, ed. *Der Austroslawismus: Ein verfröhtes Konzept zur politischen Neugestaltung Mitteleuropas*. Vienna and Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1996. 210 pp. 58,- DM (paper), ISBN 978-3-205-98362-0.

Reviewed by Irina Popova (Central European University)

Published on HABSBUURG (February, 1997)



Austroslavism: Ideology, Utopia, and Identity

In recent years, Europe has presented two opposite patterns of development –the integration of its Western part, and the fission of its East. The latter has turned scholarly work to studies on the collapse of multinational states, and has urged new attempts to answer Oszkar Jaszi’s question as to whether it was possible to unite different nationalities without abandoning their particularities and without hampering the interests of the multinational state. The answers concerning east central Europe have been mostly negative.

The contributors to the reviewed volume, which results from the second Trattner Symposium, held in June of 1994 in Tratten/Posisce,[1] address some aspects of the above problem: whether integration and transformation could have been expressed through an ideology. The general answer to this question is also largely negative. Yet the authors, most of whom are from east-central Europe[2] depart from the Marxist interpretation of Austroslavism (that it was a conservative ideology) and regard it as an ideology of modernisation and integration.

Continuing the discussion started by the first Trattner symposium, the current volume lays stress on the imperial loyalty of the Habsburg Slavs, which had been set aside by national historical schools. It gives less emphasis to the Slavs’ pro-Russian feelings, which used to be (over)emphasised by Eastern and Western historiography, thus reflecting the long term debates about Pan-Slavism and ideological controversies. The book moves from the concept of Austroslavism as a product of Pan-

Slavism, somehow following the tendency started by Jiri Koralka.[3] The volume dwells on the political concepts of the Slavic nationalities, widening the geography of Austroslavism, which had been treated as the attribute of the Czech national movement.

The seventeen papers of the volume deal with four major topics: the historiography of Austroslavism, its general aspects, the national versions, and the international context of the Habsburg Slavs’ activities.

Miroslav Sestak has conducted research on the history of Czech and Croatian national movements in the 1860s. In this article he concentrates on post-1948 developments in Czech historiography, which seem to be quite typical for the socialist historiographies of east central Europe. Sestak illustrates the changes within the Marxist research paradigm, and its evolution from the binary opposition “reaction-progress,” especially harsh as applied in the 1950s, to taking into account the multiplicity of functions that Austroslavism had performed, as well the specific features of each period of its evolution and its social basis. Summarising the attainments of the literature, the author asserts that the notion of Austroslavism should be understood in three ways: as the groundwork for Slavic cultural connections, as a program for the modernisation of the monarchy, and at the same time as a long-term national political program that embraced certain Pan-Slavic elements.

Andreas Moritsch assesses the integrative potential of Austroslavism, which is understood as the idea

of democratic national federalism, and its functions. The author indicates the succession of Pan-Slavism and Austroslavism/Austrofederalism. The latter, Moritsch claims, was a concept which connected the national principle with the multi-ethnic state, and at the same time elevated the problems of national and social emancipation to the level of imperial politics. Austroslavism enlivened the national individualities, but the perspective of democratic federalisation was restrained by the Compromise. Attempting to smooth the contradictions between the national movements, Austroslavism proved to be utopian, and the “realisable in another order” (as Karl Mannheim would put it)[4] element of this ideology was the perspective of future integration. The latter, as Moritsch implies, occurs only with a stable national identity, and not during the stage of its creation.

The papers of Vasilij Melik and Franc Rozman confirm the above argument that national contradictions broke the effective cooperation of the national political elites. Melik points to the failure of efforts to coordinate the activities of the Slavic parties in the *Reichsrat*, where Slavic deputies won a majority after the 1907 elections. Reflecting his research interest in the political history of Slovenia, the author takes this case to demonstrate the limits of cooperation with the Czechs in the Schmerling era, and the split of the Slovenian elite that hindered their collaboration with the other Slavic parties in the parliament. Rozman, who has written about the history of the working class movement in Slovenia, makes a broader generalisation of the social democratic movement in the monarchy. He notes that the social democratic parties gravitated to the solution of the national question through a regional supranational Slavic union, but included the democratisation of the Habsburg monarchy as the immediate aim of their work.

The other general problem of Austroslavism is its religious aspect. Christian Hannick sketches two alignments available for the Austrian Slavs. The first of these was liberal Catholicism opposed to Russian Orthodoxy and German Protestantism, as conceived by Karel Havlicek. The other possible confessional basis for the Habsburg Slavs could have been Orthodox-oriented Uniatism, which has barely been considered by scholarship. However, it could be inferred from the paper that the religious dimension of supranational (regional) identity was not the crucial one, and the intellectual developments in Galicia could be an example of a case when the cultural activities of Ukrainians somehow evaded confessional boundaries. The role of the clergy in the promotion national ideology has been acknowledged; Hannick’s paper points to one more im-

portant topic for the discussion, namely the role of the clergy in the making of supranational identity.

The most numerous group of papers in the volume deals with the national variants of Austroslavism, and tries to answer the question of why federalist ideas were not realised. The authors indicate that the idea of federalism first became a political possibility as the result of the 1848-49 revolution, and remained a possible, but untried solution until the collapse of the Habsburg state. The variety of national versions of Austroslavism was determined by the interplay of such factors as the social basis of the movement, the policy of language unification carried out by the dominant national groups, the concept of the historico-political entities and the Compromise arrangements, the atomisation of the national political elites, the polycentrism of the Slavic movement in the monarchy, and the orientation of the Habsburg Slavs to related ethnic groups abroad.

Otto Urban is the author of profound works on the history of Czech society. Writing about Czech Austroslavism after the Compromise, he claims that the pattern of Austroslavism set by the revolution of 1848-49 could not be a basis for Czech politics, since the international situation and the Compromise restricted Czech federalism within the Bohemian framework. The Czech-German clashes in the 1880-90s brought Czech and Slavic questions to the fore which overshadowed the Austroslavic tendency. The author states that the very notion “Austroslavism” was not defined clearly by Austroslavists themselves, and has been constructed by later scholarship. So the whole picture of the Czech Austroslavist manifestations would strongly depend on what definition of Austroslavism is applied.

Some of Horst Haselsteiner’s research has concerned Hungarian concepts of nation, and this paper provides the context for a Hungaroslavist vision of Hungary. Among the Hungarian concepts, that of Lajos Kossuth proved to be the most enduring; the Hungarian Jacobins seem to have been the only group that championed the idea of Hungary’s federalisation, since in the nineteenth century federalisation was envisaged as that of the empire. Thus the Hungarian scheme suggested only one possible variant for the non-Magyar nationalities, assimilation and acculturation, and the failure of federalist projects reinforced the secessionist movements in 1918. This reviewer notes, however, that one more alternative (although inconclusive) was available for the nationalities of the Hungarian kingdom: the representation of their national interests through Hungarian institutions.

The case of the Slovaks could be an illustration for the above alternative, since the Slovak elite adhered to a solution of the national problem within the Hungarian kingdom, considering the Austro-Slovak variants during the revolution of 1848-49. Slovak Austroslavist tendencies had a tinge of Kollar's Pan-Slavism and expressed themselves in the idea of the Habsburg Slavs' union as a cultural one, as Tatiana Ivantysynova, who has studied Russian perceptions of the Czechs and Slovaks, states.

The papers of Olexandr Massan and Antoni Cetnarowicz introduce two patterns of the national programs in Galicia: the national autonomy propagated by the Ukrainian elite, and the autonomy of Galicia supported by the Poles. As presented by Massan's paper, Austroslavism was crucial for shaping the program of the Ukrainian national movement. Cetnarowicz argues that the interconnections between the Polish question in general and the Polish question in Galicia were much more complicated than previously presented, and that the way to Galician autonomy lay through abandoning the Polish question as a matter of international relations.

Janez Cvirn shows that Slovenian political realism was combined with Yugoslavism and Russophilia, but that Slovenian loyalty to the monarchy remained unquestioned until its very end. Basing his work on the profound study of the archival sources, Arnold Suppan goes into detail concerning the publication of Ljudevit Stur's newspaper *Novine Horvatzke* (later *Ilyrske Narodne Novine*). His paper gives as an example the Viennese policy which encouraged the Croatian national movement, but failed to defend it against Hungarian pressure. Nevertheless, as Iskra Iveljic points out, the Croatian national movement was developing within the framework of Hungarian constitutionalism; the Austroslavist elements and the projects of liberal modernisation in Croatia were brought into the movement during the revolution of 1848-49. The Compromise caused the Croatian elite to withdraw from Austroslavism, which remained marginal as a part of the program of the left-wing parties, and to move to Trialism, Yugoslavism, and in part Pan-Croatism.

One of the main points of Drago Rokсандić is that Serbian national integration in the monarchy was a polycentric process. The Serbs had to territorialise their national interests, which were sustained by long traditions of Serbian statehood and by the Habsburg policy of granting privileges that preserved ethno-confessional particularities. The concentration on Vojvodina and the inner integration of Serbian society localised the Serbian

activities, so that they stood apart from supranational ideologies such as Illyrism and Austroslavism, though the collaboration with the other Slavic movements was not excluded from Serbian politics.

The international context of Austroslavism is delineated by the papers of Zoya Nenasheva and Olga Pavlenko. Nenasheva has published extensively on Neo-Slavism and Russian Slavic societies. She discusses the perceptions of Czech Austroslavism in Russia in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Among the Russian societies, which promoted the cultural connection with the Slavs and sponsored Slavic students in Russia, the Kyjiv Society seems to have been the most Habsburg-oriented. Russian periodicals commented on almost all aspects of Austroslavism, but they tended to misrepresent the Czechs as part of the imagined Slav world opposed to Germany, and not as a part of the Habsburg realm and Europe.

Pavlenko's paper, which is based on extensive study of the Russian archives and her earlier studies of Pan-Slavism in Russia and the Czech Austroslavism, examines the emergence of the Pan-Slav trend in Russian foreign policy between 1848 and 1871. Before the Crimean War, Russian Pan-Slavism had been advanced mainly by scholars, by the individual activities of diplomats, and by the Orthodox Church. In the 1860s, Pan-Slavism was institutionalised through the Slavic societies, and became a concern for both Russian internal and foreign policy. The latter cautiously and selectively used the contacts with the Slavic national movements. Yet, the author does not make clear the interaction of the domestic and internal components of Russian Slavic policy, confining herself to their mere description. The paper also leaves open the question of how the opinions of Russian diplomats affected the decision-making process.

In summary, it could be noted that, at the very least, Austroslavism represented the Slavs' loyalty to the empire and to the dynasty. As a cultural movement, it sustained both national and supranational (regional) identities. It has been noted that religion turned out to be an important factor in shaping national identity, but it is still a question for further discussion as to how it affected supranational identity. The political dimension of supranational identity expressed itself through the programs of federalisation which, on the one hand, fixed the vision of the monarchy as the multinational state, and on the other hand were designed to secure the position of the national group in the empire, and simultaneously suggested the restructuring of all power relationships in

the monarchy.

One can agree with Roksandic's argument that Austroslavism, like every supranational ideology, was in opposition to national ideologies. On the other hand, it was an integral part of them, and an integral part of national identity of the Habsburg Slavs. In this respect, Gudrun Schmalzbauer notes that Austroslavism was a tool for the construction of national identity, but simultaneously accentuated the inner contradictions of the national movements. So one encounters a paradox that supranational identity as expressed on the national level proved to be self-destructive.

The discussion about Austroslavism points also to some new directions in study of nationalism. Moritsch claims that the national ideologies shaped the compact national entities of the Habsburg Slavs during the relatively short period of time (this argument, however, seems close to the "invented traditions" of Eric Hobsbawm). Moritsch regards this factor, together with defensiveness of the Slav's nationalism, as a specific type of nationalism. The other type of nationalism which is worth a discussion could be that suggested by Koralka's study of the Czech case, namely a nationalism containing a strong supranational element.

To understand Austroslavism as a supranational identity, one cannot avoid discussing the identity of "would-be-nation (empire)," or what Melik calls the opinions of what the Habsburg monarchy should have been. In this respect, Austroslavism was the ideology that anticipated the social and political modernisation of the monarchy; simultaneously, it was brought about by non-correspondence between different levels of modernisation.

One could hardly expect the proceedings of the symposium to cover all aspects of the problem. The references to Marxism may be vexing to some (though Marxism, even jettisoned, remains part of the historical and historiographical heritage of Eastern Europe). One could even regard this work as too factual at the expense of conceptualisation, though this may be more a merit than a shortcoming. Yet, it would be difficult to deny that this is an important contribution to research and debate.

NOTES:

[1]. The first symposium took place in 1992 and was devoted to Matija Majar-Zilski, the formulator of the Slovenian national program.

[2]. In order to present the research interests of the contributors to the volume, some of their works are enlisted below. Miroslav Sestak, Vladislav Stastny (eds.), *Myslenkovy vyvoj Cechu, Slovaku a Jihoslovanu od poloviny 18. soleti do burzoazni revoluce 1848-1849* (Praha: Ceskoslovensko-sovetsky institut CSAV, 1985); Andreas Moritsch, *Landwirtschaft und Agrarpolitik in Russland vor der Revolution* (Wien: Bhlau, 1986); Vasilij Melik, *Volitve na Slovenskem 1861-1918* (Ljubljana, 1969); Franc Rozman, *Socialisticno delavsko gibanje na slovenskem Stajerskem* (Ljubljana, 1979); Christian Hannick, *Studien zu den griechischen und slawischen liturgischen Handschriften der sterreichischen Nationalbibliothek* (Wien: Bohlau, 1972); Otto Urban, *Die tschechische Gesellschaft, 1848 bis 1918* (Wien-Kln-Weimar: Bhlau, 1994); Tatiana Ivantysynova, *Cesi a Slovaci v ideologii ruskych slavjanofilov* (Bratislava: Veda, 1987); Horst Haselsteiner, *Joseph II und die Komitate Ungarns* (Wien-Koln-Graz: Bhlau, 1983); Arnold Suppan, Helmut Rumppler, eds., *Geschichte der Deutschen im Bereich des heutigen Slowenen. 1848-1918*, Schriftenreihe des sterreichischen Ost- und Suedosteuropa-Instituts, Bd. 13. (Wien: Verlag fr Geschichte und Politik/ Mnchen: Oldenburg, 1988); Drago Roksandic, *Srpska i hrvatska povijest i "nova historija"* (Zagreb: Stvarnost, 1991); Zoja S. Nenasheva, *Idejno-politicheska bor'ba v Chehii i Slovakii v nachale XX veka. Chehi, Slovaki i neoslavism* (Moskva: Nauka, 1984); Olga V. Pavlenko (Lebedeva), "Problemy panslavizma v Chehii i Rossii v pervoj polovine 19 veka," in *Natsija i natsional'nij vopros v stranah Tsentral'noj i Jugo-Vostochnoj Evropy* (Moskva: Nauka 1991), pp. 98-105.

[3]. Jiri Koralka, *Tschechen im Habsburgerreich und in Europa: 1815-1914*, Schriftenreihe des sterreichischen Ost- und Suedosteuropa-Instituts, Bd. 18. (Wien: Verlag fr Geschichte und Politik/ Mnchen: Oldenburg, 1991).

[4]. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London/ New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 177.

Copyright (c) 1997 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 HABSBURG. For other permission, please contact <reviews@h-net.msu.edu> and <habsburg@ttacs6.ttu.edu>.

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

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

Citation: Irina Popova. Review of Moritsch, Andreas, ed., *Der Austroslawismus: Ein verfröhtes Konzept zur politischen Neugestaltung Mitteleuropas*. HABSBURG, H-Net Reviews. February, 1997.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=810>

Copyright © 1997 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.