



Konrad Clewing. *Staatlichkeit und nationale Identitätsbildung: Dalmatien in Vormärz und Revolution.* München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2001. 464 pp. EUR 49,00, cloth, ISBN 978-3-486-56526-3.



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Nationsbildung or Nation-building?

The events of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia have shocked many historians into probing the region's history for events foreshadowing the violence and extreme nationalism that has come to be associated with the breakup of Yugoslavia. This inquiry has led some to conclude that the dissolution of one of the last remaining truly multi-ethnic European states was the work of opportunistic elites who used fear to provoke violence. [1] Others see the Yugoslav state-building project as a failure from the beginning, a state that from its earliest incarnation (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes) succeeded neither in propagating a specific Yugoslav identity through education, nor in mending the rifts that emerged along ethnic lines during political showdowns. [2] In the ongoing search for an explanation of the Yugoslav disaster, historians of the region must decide how far back in history the answers lie.

At a conference on borderlands and ethnic violence held in May 2002 at Brown University, István Deák commented that studies on this theme should begin by addressing "the hitherto

poorly studied ethnic situation during the 1848 revolutions." [3] Konrad Clewing's book, *Staatlichkeit und nationale Identitätsbildung: Dalmatien in Vormärz und Revolution*, goes a step further, looking at identity formation in Dalmatia from 1814 up to the swan song of the revolution in 1849. In taking this perspective, Clewing contributes to our understanding not only of the evolution of various "former-Yugoslav" nationalisms--above all Croatian, Serbian, and Yugoslav--but also enriches and refines the existing literature on nationalism more generally.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Dalmatia was a newcomer to the Habsburg Empire. In 1797, centuries of Venetian rule ended when the province was handed over to Austria with the Treaty of Campo Formio. Dalmatia's first term under Austrian rule effectively ended in 1806, when it was occupied and annexed by France. The Napoleonic code brought infrastructure and cultural development to Dalmatia and the other so-called Illyrian Provinces from 1809 until they were successfully invaded by Austria in 1814. The Congress of Vienna (1815) made Dalma-

tia's status as an Austrian province official once again. Clewing's book covers the period during which Vienna sought to integrate the province into the Empire in such a way as to facilitate the creation of a modern state.

Clewing focuses primarily on the effects of the increasingly intimate relationship between the state and society on the emergence of concepts of nationality. Using contemporary publications, periodical literature, private papers and correspondence, and official documents from the Dalmatian provincial administration, he shows that processes of modernization made the presence of the state in society (*Staatlichkeit*) more pervasive. In Dalmatia, this expanding influence of the state raised questions of centralization vs. decentralization, definition of "insiders" and "outsiders," and the state's linguistic policy in a polyglot region. These were common tropes in nearly every part of the Habsburg Empire, though many of the details differed from province to province.

Despite the state's growing presence in society, however, Clewing argues that the widely held perception of the *Vormärz* as a period during which the Habsburg state penetrated into the "deepest depths" of society is false. The state did expand its influence, but often did so neither consistently nor effectively. Changes were not tailored to the needs of the province in question, but to the overall needs of the state. The increase in *Staatlichkeit* thus stood in sharp contrast to the political and economic backwardness of the Dalmatian province. Yet it was only with the 1848 revolution that conditions were ripe for an open discussion among Dalmatian elites about the impact of the political and social changes and problems that characterized the *Vormärz*. During these exchanges established and emerging elites voiced various conceptions of national identity and attempted to propagate them more broadly. This is not to say that such identities were already conceptually fixed. On the contrary, Clewing points not only to an astonishing multiplicity of

conceptions of national identity, but also to their mutability.

He distinguishes five discreet forms of national identity developed by Dalmatia's various clerical, professional, intellectual, and bureaucratic elites: Illyrian, Dalmatian Croat, Serb, Slavodalmatian, and Italodalmatian. Each claimed various degrees of universality based on religion, language, and/or common historical/regional heritage. [4]

From Clewing's discussion of these emerging identities and their evolution, we see how elites struggled to create an identity that could at once address the problems posed by regional backwardness and incomplete or ineffectual manifestations of *Staatlichkeit*, while assuring the state leadership of the group's loyalty to the state (represented by the person of the Emperor). These groups sought to gain greater influence and control over areas in which the state had made its presence known during the *Vormärz*, such as in churches, schools, and the expanding bureaucracy. Their attention repeatedly turned to the issue of language, and their efforts were concentrated on introducing the vernacular to the above institutions with hopes that, in doing so, citizens would become more capable of participating in and influencing state initiatives to correct the province's backwardness, rather than passively adopting whatever policies and reforms came their way. [5]

A revealing comparison to the Dalmatian case for this period is the "Slovene Lands" (Carniola, Carinthia, Gorizia, Styria, etc.). There, too, we see the emergence of alternative regional affinities which then demanded a redefinition of national identities. Various takes on pan-slavism, for example, or a union with Croats, took forms structurally similar to the early national identities described by Clewing. Notably, however, in contrast to Clewing's findings for Dalmatia, no real presence of a strictly provincial "national" identity comparable to Clewing's Dalmatian, Italodalma-

tian or Slavodalmatian identities is discernable for the Slovene case. This discrepancy is likely due to differences in the size and linguistic and confessional make-up of the provinces in question, as well as to their historical status within the Empire. [6]

Only three of the five forms of national identity that emerged during the first half of the nineteenth century in Dalmatia were destined to complete the process of *Nationsbildung*: the Serb, Croat, and Italian. Clewing argues that, up until its renaissance in the last decade or so prior to World War I, "Yugoslavism"--which had its beginnings in Illyrianism--lost much of its popularity in the wake of the 1848 revolutions. He goes so far as to assert that "in terms of linguistic consciousness and more generally on the level of pre-national ethnic identity there existed [...] no positive predisposition toward South Slavic *Nationsbildung*" (p. 364). [7]

Clewing's work thus raises a number of questions relevant to the history of the region more broadly, that might, thanks to his extremely detailed analysis of the Dalmatian case, be taken up by historians in the future. More important, however, is his contribution to our understanding of nationalism. He reiterates the now commonly held conception of identity as mutable in conjunction with the conditions of history, which at times favor identities of a national, at others of a regional character.

Clewing goes one step further, though, offering a critique of Eric Hobsbawm and Ernest Gellner for their oversimplified understanding of the concept of "nation" as interchangeable with that of "nationalism" and the "striving for a sovereign nation state." In their earliest incarnations, Clewing argues, national movements do not strive for sovereignty. Instead, "above all it is a matter of demanding self-determination, participation and control over *Staatlichkeit*, and only thereafter of complete power (sovereignty) within the state" (p. 369). [8]

Clewing's critique of Hobsbawm and Gellner results in a call to dismiss as misleading the term "nation-building" to describe early mechanisms of national identity formation. His point is well taken, particularly as the term suggests a teleological inevitability to the process that makes a more complex and nuanced confrontation of a given "national" past all the more difficult.

Notes:

[1]. John Fine puts forth this view in his contribution to a collection of papers soon to be published by Stanford University Press. John V. A. Fine, "Heretical Thoughts about the Post-Communist Transition in the Once and Future Yugoslavia," *Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s*, Norman M. Naimark and Holly Case, eds. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, [forthcoming, 2003]).

[2]. See, among others, Charles Jelavich's contribution to the above-mentioned forthcoming work, "South Slav Education: Was There Yugoslavism?", *Ibid.*; Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998); and Christian A. Nielsen, "One State, One Nation, One King: The Dictatorship of King Aleksandar and His Yugoslav Project, 1929-1935", unpublished dissertation, Columbia University, 2002.

[3]. István Deák, "The City and the Countryside in Interethnic Violence," p. 5. The reference is to a paper delivered at the conference "Borderlands: Ethnicity, Identity, and Violence in Eastern Europe," March 15-17, 2002 at the Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University. Cited with permission of the author.

[4]. Clewing's discussion of these emerging identities provides an intriguing complement to conceptions of Dalmatian identity as described by Larry Wolff in his recently published work on Dalmatia during the Enlightenment: Larry Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs: The Discovery of Dalmatia*

in the Age of Enlightenment (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001).

[5]. Vienna favored the use of Italian as the official language of administration in Dalmatia.

[6]. See Holly Case, "Slovene Self-Perception through the Slovene- and German-Language Press: 1848" in *Historicni Seminar* 3, Metoda Kokole, Vojislav Likar and Peter Weiss, eds. (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2000) pp. 37-60.

[7]. "Im Bereich des Sprachbewußtseins und insgesamt auf der Ebene vornationaler ethnischer Identität existierte [...] keinerlei positive Prädisposition für eine südslawische Nationsbildung." I have deliberately neglected to translate "Nationsbildung" since I believe Clewing would disapprove of the term "nation-building" in its stead.

[8]. "Insgesamt geht es in erster Linie um die Erlangung von Selbstbestimmung, Teilhabe und Kontrolle über die Staatlichkeit, erst dann um die volle Macht im Staat."

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