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# Grasping Toward Austria: The Anschluss - Book Review

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## Conference Group for Central European History of the American Historical Association

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Recent Writing on Interwar Austria

Der Griff nach Österreich: Der Anschluss by Norbert Schausberger; Gewalt in der Politik: Attentate, Zusammenstöße, Putschversuche, Unruhen in Österreich 1918 bis 1934 by Gerhard Botz; The 'Heimwehr' and Austrian Politics 1918-1936 by C. Earl Edmondson; Der Putsch: Die Nationalsozialisten 1934 in Österreich by Gerhard Jagschitz; Alfred Baubin; Die Eingliederung Österreichs in das Deutsche Reich: Planung und Verwirklichung ...

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## REVIEW ARTICLE

### Recent Writing on Interwar Austria

HARRY RITTER

THE 1970s were an interesting and significant decade for the historiography of contemporary Austria. Among Austrian scholars, the tradition of *Koalitionsgeschichtsschreibung*, a reflection of the political and bureaucratic system of *Proporz* which reigned in the 1950s and 1960s, began to break down. With the triumph of Social Democracy under Bruno Kreisky, fewer historians—especially those of the

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*Der Griff nach Österreich: Der Anschluss.* By NORBERT SCHAUSBERGER. Vienna and Munich: Jugend und Volk Verlagsgesellschaft, 1978. Pp. 666. ö.S.598.

*Gewalt in der Politik: Attentate, Zusammenstöße, Putschversuche, Unruhen in Österreich 1918 bis 1934.* By GERHARD BOTZ. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1976. Pp. 358. DM36.

*The 'Heimwehr' and Austrian Politics 1918–1936.* By C. EARL EDMONDSON. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1978. Pp. xii, 352. \$22.

*Der Putsch: Die Nationalsozialisten 1934 in Österreich.* By GERHARD JAGSCHITZ, with ALFRED BAUBIN. Graz, Vienna, and Cologne: Verlag Styria, 1976. Pp. 260. ö.S.390.

*Die Eingliederung Österreichs in das Deutsche Reich: Planung und Verwirklichung des politisch-administrativen Anschlusses (1938–1940).* By GERHARD BOTZ. Schriftenreihe des Ludwig Boltzmann Instituts für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung, 1. 2nd enl. ed. Linz: Europaverlag, 1976. Pp. 194. DM21, sfr.21, ö.S.148.

*Austro-German Relations in the Anschluss Era.* By RADOMÍR LUŽA. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975. Pp. xvi, 438. \$22.50.

“left”—were willing to continue sharing in the orderly division of responsibility for the recent past. Moreover, some of the controversy aroused in Germany by Fritz Fischer’s work began to invigorate Austrian historical studies. Both in Austria and abroad, historians became less inclined to treat Austria as a unique case, and increasingly interested in the Alpine state as a study in the general development of contemporary central Europe. The publication of Norbert Schausberger’s *Der Griff nach Österreich* in early 1978—the fortieth anniversary of the *Anschluss*—marked in some respects a milestone in this direction; it provides the opportunity to review a sampling of the more interesting recent literature, and to reflect, as well, on some general problems of conceptualizing contemporary Austrian history.

Schausberger’s ambitious and important study contains not only a detailed analysis of the *Anschluss* problem, but a general interpretation of central European history in the interwar period. To a large degree, his conclusions are less original than carefully buttressed reaffirmations of traditional social democratic interpretations. Nevertheless, his book will become a key source in the network of literature on twentieth-century Austria because it is the first comprehensive survey which systematically fits the *Anschluss* story into the framework of debate on the problem of “continuity” in modern German history. (The vocabulary of analysis, like the title, appears to have been directly inspired by Fischer’s *Griff nach der Weltmacht*.) Schausberger’s style is compact, his arguments are skillfully documented, and he writes with a special eye to socioeconomic problems, relating them to diplomatic history in the spirit of *Primat der Innenpolitik*. His economic analysis—a personal specialty—is eclectic, inspired by elements of both Marxist and Keynesian theory. He also writes with an explicit didactic purpose: to dispel the residues of mythic nationalism which survive in much of the German-language *Anschluss* literature by exposing the idea of a German-Austrian “community of destiny” as an ideological veneer which masked the rapacious economic and strategic designs of the German power elite. Like much of the current “continuity” literature, Schausberger’s book reflects the present political climate in central Europe: radically critical of the recent past, it tacitly endorses the present neoliberal/social-democratic order. In Austrian terms, this means that it is a contribution to the task of “building an Austrian nation.”

Schausberger devotes considerable attention to the social and economic analysis of interwar Austrian politics. For the elite, he argues,

union with Weimar Germany promised a balm for the “psychic discontent” which followed military defeat and the collapse of empire. But rump Austria was not, contrary to widespread opinion, *der Staat den keiner wollte*. In Schausberger’s view, independence, though imposed by the western powers, “corresponded to the course of historical development, and was rapidly accepted by the populace.” *Anschluss* was an idea which had to be energetically cultivated, and the most powerful legend created to justify union was the notion that independent Austria was *lebensunfähig*, incapable of economic survival. This fallacious idea became so ingrained that it developed into a self-fulfilling prophecy; few would dare invest in the future of a state condemned from the beginning to die, and the lack of investment capital was the greatest economic weakness of the First Republic. Austria, he concludes, was not a “state” but an “economy” against its will, in which the myth of economic nonviability functioned propagandistically in much the same way as the *Dolchstoß* legend in Germany.

While critical of Socialist leaders on various grounds, Schausberger strongly emphasizes the primary responsibility of Christian Socialism for Austria’s destruction. Another important legend—second only to the myth of *Lebensunfähigkeit*—was the idea that Ignaz Seipel and his financial aides “saved” the economy in the 1920s. In fact, the ultimate triumph of the *Anschluss* was unwittingly but powerfully assisted by Seipel’s anachronistic deflationary policies—“friendly to capital but hostile to people”—which condemned Austria to staggering unemployment and fueled social and political unrest. Matters were complicated by the nostalgic policies of the big banks, which tried to perpetuate Vienna’s role as the financial center of Danubian Europe instead of committing themselves to restructuring the Austrian economy. These policies were continued by Dollfuss at a time, Schausberger maintains, when economists in other countries were already making practical use of Keynesian theory; they culminated in Schuschnigg’s historically absurd “politics of illusion,” designed to revive a medieval social order and impose it on a modern economy. It was little wonder that Christian Social policy provided no practical alternative to the *Anschluss* idea, even in its National Socialist guise.

Schausberger’s major emphasis, however, is not on Austria’s domestic affairs but on the continuity of German policy toward Austria. Throughout the era of Germany’s quest for world power, he argues, Austria played the same key role in the autarchic vision of the German

financial and military elite. Even before 1914, Austria was seen as an “indispensable springboard” to the southeast; for German imperialists from the Wilhelmine to the Nazi period, the *Griff nach Österreich* was conceived as the first stage of expansion into the Balkans.

In texture, this argument strikes one as a combination of the traditional economic interpretation of imperialism popularized by Hobson and Marxists such as Hilferding at the turn of the century, and of the fashionably *au courant* in German diplomatic history. On the one hand, Schausberger quotes Nikolai Bukharin on the symbiotic relationship between big finance and the modern state, and reaffirms the validity of Franz Neumann’s classic socialist definition of fascism as the capitalist answer to a social-revolutionary crisis. On the other, he touches all the latest historiographical bases in his effort to fit the story of interwar Austro-German relations into the framework of the Fischer thesis. He particularly emphasizes Austria’s economic importance to German strategists, arguing that the full significance of her resources for German industry has been insufficiently appreciated in the past. It is in his careful documentation of this aspect of the story that he makes his most original research contribution.

The weaknesses of *Der Griff nach Österreich* are, to a great extent, the result of dangers inherent in the Hobson-Hilferding and Fischer theses. By and large, however, Schausberger’s application of both is sophisticated and convincingly documented. In general, he is commendably sensitive to the vital differences of degree which distinguish Wilhelmine imperialism from Weimar revisionism, and both from Nazi aggression, although he does occasionally succumb to the temptation to reify “German policy” and make his story sound rather too pat and conspiratorial. Moreover, in his pedagogical zeal he occasionally threatens to substitute liberal and socialist myths for nationalist legends; for example, he has a faint but perceptible tendency to romanticize the “masses” and absolve them from responsibility for Austria’s misfortunes. The book’s strengths, however, far outweigh its flaws. It provides us with a solid explanation of Austria’s economic and strategic importance to an expansionist Germany, and gives us a comprehensive and generally convincing interpretation of the *Anschluss* problem and its place in early twentieth-century international affairs. And, not least in importance, the book avoids the tone of self-pity which characterizes so much historical writing about modern Austria. Primary responsibility for a nation’s fate usually rests with the country itself. For all of his emphasis on German

*Grossraumpolitik* as a source of evil—not to mention the diplomatic policies of the western governments—Schausberger correctly locates the ultimate reasons for Austria's demise in the country's unresolved domestic tensions and the illusory policies of her interwar leaders. "Not external circumstances," he concludes, "but inappropriate politics led to the inescapable situation of 1938."

The next three books may be grouped together; less broad in scope than Schausberger's sweeping survey, all deal in some way with what one of the authors, Gerhard Botz, calls the "barbarization of political life" in interwar Austria. Botz, one of Austria's more prolific young scholars, has chosen in *Gewalt in der Politik* an especially amorphous subject: "force" as a political phenomenon of the First Republic. Like Schausberger, he has a clearly defined didactic goal. His study, he informs us, is written from the standpoint of "pacifistic-democratic engagement." It is a plea for nonviolence which seeks to convince its readers through the use of "scientific methods" that the effort to control violence by resorting to violence is self-defeating, that force inevitably breeds counter-force, and that society must develop nonviolent means for reducing and controlling violence. As a credo, his position has much to recommend it, but as history the results of his inquiry are disappointing. His opening chapter, which rather unsystematically surveys some of the recent theoretical contributions to the problem of social violence, is loosely tied to the body of the work, which consists of a lengthy chronicle of the incidents of political violence between 1918 and early 1934—spontaneous eruptions of mass discontent, conspiratorial Putsches, individual acts of terror. This series of vignettes, based on broad reading in newspapers, police files, and trial records, is occasionally interrupted by statistical and social-psychological analysis, and there is a final chapter in which Botz draws statistical conclusions on the basis of his data.

Despite the facade of quantification, however, Botz's effort to chart a precise map of violence is not particularly convincing. In many cases, his samples are simply too small. The attempt to generalize about the social backgrounds and age structure of interwar militants based on evidence relating to only 306 individuals, for example, seems dubious. Botz himself laments the paucity and frequent unreliability of his data; such complaints, however, do not absolve him of the problems of their use. Moreover, the conclusions which do seem justified—e.g., that there was a "direct connection between unemployment and political mili-

tancy,” or that Vienna and Graz were the most important centers of political violence—are, all too frequently, simply assertions of the obvious. Finally, without an external standard by which to gauge such things as the “number of armed clashes,” the “number of victims of political violence,” etc., Botz’s conclusions lack wider meaning. Admittedly, this sort of hard statistical information about other periods and other countries may be hard to come by, but studies of popular violence, especially for France and England, do exist; comparison with such studies would bring the picture of political violence in interwar Austria into sharper focus.

Nevertheless, the book is not without merit. Ironically, the chief value of this rather pretentiously methodological study lies in its most traditional feature: the chronicle of events, the anecdotes, and the biographical profiles of individuals. Wherever Botz trains his lens on the particular and the unique, his story becomes effective and absorbing. His vignettes are drawn with vividness and insight; they “localize” the story of violence and capture something of the texture of life during the First Republic. In the last analysis, it is simply the detail of the story itself which is most enlightening.

C. Earl Edmondson’s *The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics* is a less bold and self-consciously innovative study related to the problem of violence in Austria. Edmondson concentrates on the theme of force as manifested in the history of one movement—the *Heimwehr*—and the relationship of this organization to the governing clique. His book is a workmanlike attempt to tell a political story, to “provide an overall picture of the *Heimwehr*’s origins and development, its goals and ideology, and its role in Austrian politics.” Tenaciously, Edmondson pursues the often confusing story of the *Heimwehr* and draws together the elements of an ignoble tale of conspiracy and churlish ambition. His uninspired style is sometimes tedious, but readers will appreciate the *Sitzfleisch* required to disentangle the story. His characterizations of the *Heimwehr* chieftains are good, and we get a fairly clear picture of the roles played by men such as Seipel and Schober in the rise and fall of the likes of Steidle, Pfrimer, Starhemberg, and Fey.

Like the *Heimwehr* leaders themselves, Edmondson is primarily interested not in theory but in pragmatic questions of attaining and exercising power. In a short introduction, he briefly addresses the problem of the *Heimwehr*’s place in the context of twentieth-century ideology; but (and many would consider this a virtue) he contributes nothing new



to the general theoretical debate on the nature of fascism. Drawing primarily on Ernst Nolte's ideas, he defines the *Heimwehr* as a species of generic fascism, describing it more specifically as a type of "*konkurrenz* fascism" which "followed the lead of and competed with the example of its larger neighbors." The organization never won a genuine mass following because its leaders were such mediocre *condottiere* and, more importantly, because it could not appeal to nationalism. "Austrian nationalism did not yet exist," he notes, "and the Heimwehr ultimately lost its most fervent nationalist adherents to groups dedicated solely to bringing about union with Germany." Numerically, it never amounted to more than a "paramilitary pressure group" which the forces of clerical conservatism were able to use as a "bludgeon"—an especially apt choice of words—to destroy republicanism and suppress social democracy. Once this was done, Schuschnigg dispensed with it altogether, dissolving it in 1936.

In general, then, Edmondson has produced a useful monograph. Still, there is a disturbing incongruity in his presentation which is symptomatic of a deeper flaw of framing and conceptualizing history in general. One of the chief vices of historians is the habit of trying to impart a note of seriousness and universal significance to their findings by indiscriminately linking them with the notion of "tragedy." I hasten to add that I do not completely subscribe to Fritz Fischer's view that historians should entirely "avoid concepts like 'fate, destiny, doom, and tragedy,' which fade into the incomprehensible and metaphysical."<sup>1</sup> The use of dramatic metaphor is one of the historian's legitimate—indeed, virtually unavoidable—means for structuring and elucidating his material; Hayden White has recently underscored the importance of this poetic aspect of the historian's craft in his *Metahistory* (1973). Too often, however—and particularly in the case of the appeal to "tragedy"—this is done so superficially and thoughtlessly that it debases the concept or contradicts the evidence. Most historians have probably been guilty of this kind of transgression at one time or another; the question is not whether they should use dramatic devices, but how they use them, i.e., whether the poetic forms to which they appeal are proper to their evidence and consistent with the thrust of their arguments. In fact, what many historians really seem to mean when they use the word "tragedy" is "sad story." The temptation to succumb to this cloying mannerism is almost irresist-

1. Fritz Fischer, *World Power or Decline: The Controversy over "Germany's Aims in the First World War"* (New York, 1974), p. 124.

ible in the case of modern Austria. The clichés of “martyrdom” and “inevitability”—whether associated with July 1927, February or July 1934, or February–March 1938—seem too powerful to resist; moreover, they can be effortlessly adapted to the ideological needs of writers of the right or the left, or used to mask a political bias.

The problem is all the more obvious in Edmondson’s book because it is otherwise so unassuming. Although he conscientiously tries to balance the ledger of guilt, it is clear that he sees the “tragedy” essentially from the Christian Social point of view. This becomes most transparent in his apologetic account of the relationship between the *Heimwehr* and the “humane” dictator, Engelbert Dollfuss. The “sad dilemma” of Dollfuss’s reliance on *Heimwehr* support is described as a “tragedy.” Dollfuss is depicted as the captive of forces beyond his control, a man “driven into a position in which he had no choice.” It was his “sad plight” to be “pushed” to the right; he had no choice but to suppress parliamentary government. As for the February civil war of 1934, “given the constellation of past events, personalities, and outside pressures, there hovers over the conflict an aura of inevitability. . . . Once the socialists began armed resistance, Dollfuss had little choice but to suppress it.” More plausible, however, is Schausberger’s satiric representation of the evidence; this entire “dilemma” was not the result of fate, but of conscious choice. It was the logical culmination of Christian Socialism’s narrow, antiliberal policies, not a tragedy of inexorable circumstance. In any case, what Edmondson really gives us is not tragedy, but a quasi-melodrama about the death of Austrian independence in which the *Heimwehr* and the Nazis are the villains, the stubborn Socialists their unconscious allies, and Austria (personified by Dollfuss) is the pathetic victim. But his conclusion regarding the *Heimwehr*—that, though it “became for a while a symbol of Austria’s independence, its accomplishments probably hastened the end of Austria”—seems quite as applicable to Dollfuss as well.

Like Botz and Edmondson, Gerhard Jagschitz is concerned with the barbarization of politics in interwar Austria, but his book on the Nazi Putsch of 1934 is couched in terms of the absurd and grotesque rather than those of applied social science or high drama. His tale is one of “confusion and perplexity” and “human and bureaucratic inadequacy,” of “abused ideals, the inherent weakness of a supposedly authoritarian system, of criminal romanticism [and] cold political *Vabanquespiel*.” These perceptions are the fruits of a classic exercise in historical inquiry,

an attempt to discover what really happened despite documentary lacunae and the distortion or falsification of much of the evidence. Jagschitz emphasizes that many of his findings are tentative, but argues that they are sufficiently well grounded to contribute to the task of demystifying events long shrouded by an emotionalism focused on the murder of Dollfuss. Aside from reconstructing the course of events, he is especially interested in analyzing the role of Dollfuss as “martyr of the Austrian idea,” and clarifying the unresolved question of Hitler’s precise role in the Putsch.

In the case of Hitler, the issue is whether he was—directly or indirectly—a participant in the Putsch, or whether the attempted coup was simply a product of the adventurism of the Austrian Nazis under Theo Habicht. Jagschitz concludes that the Führer was not directly involved, but was nonetheless a passive participant because he strongly suspected that a plot was taking shape and did nothing to stop it. This conflicted with the course of moderation he had just adopted to appease Mussolini, but here, as in so many other instances, Hitler pursued an intuitive policy of *Mehrgleichsigkeit*, allowing his subordinates to swim against the current of his mainstream policies in anticipation that fortune and his political cunning would allow him to capitalize on a fluid situation. When the Putsch ended in fiasco, Hitler of course feigned ignorance of the entire affair and used Habicht as a scapegoat.

Jagschitz’s observations about Dollfuss—while not strikingly original—are more sober and considerably less flattering than those of Edmondson. When he became chancellor, Jagschitz notes, Dollfuss was not well known. It is one of the remarkable features of Austrian historiography that there has been so little scholarly inquiry into the biography of this man, who was an advocate of *Anschluss* for most of his life, but became a symbol of Austrian independence at the very end. According to Jagschitz, Dollfuss had no clear program for Austria, but nevertheless “stood completely in the tradition of conservative dissatisfaction with democracy.” Though he had no preconceived plan for dismantling parliamentary government, when the pretext presented itself he went about the task with “disregard for the spirit and letter of existing legal norms.” In his mind, the most important way to defend Austria was to overpower social democracy. Despite his distrust of the irrationality and anticlericalism of the *Hitlerbewegung*, he was willing—even while publicly defending Austrian independence against Nazi terrorism—to deal secretly with the Nazis in an effort to broaden the basis of his anti-

Marxist front. After February 1934 he looked for help to gradualists within the native National Socialist camp. In June and July he initiated talks with Neubacher, Seyss-Inquart, and Rheinthaller designed to activate the more moderate proponents of *Anschluss* against the terrorists under Habicht. Thus, just before his death, he laid the foundations for a policy which would lead, under his successor, to Austria's incorporation into the Third Reich.

On the Putsch itself, Jagschitz is unable to answer conclusively the question of whether Dollfuss was murdered according to accident or design—there are persuasive arguments on both sides—nor can he definitively resolve the mystery of the two shots which caused the chancellor's death. He strongly suggests, however, that the second shot was fired by a Viennese policeman, which would help to explain the mantle of secrecy cast around the “unpleasant” affair by higher police, bureaucratic, and military functionaries. Jagschitz rules out the idea that Emil Fey was involved in the conspiracy, but explains how the Viennese *Heimwehr* leader may have tried to manipulate the situation for his own ends.

Jagschitz concludes with some brief but perceptive remarks on the efforts of both the Nazis and the Austrian dictatorship to build a mystique around the Putsch—the “banalizing orgies, hollow pathos, and patriotic kitsch” surrounding the apotheosis of Dollfuss on the one hand, the cult of revolutionary martyrdom on the other. The Dollfuss myth was a fundamental part of Schuschnigg's effort to consecrate an ideology of Austrian traditionalism and independence to give the dictatorship a popular emotional basis, but this proved to be an illusory defense against the real threat of National Socialist Germany. Though less successful than the Nazi brand of political mysticism as an ideological weapon, in the long run the Dollfuss cult has been the more serious impediment to historical understanding.

The last two books deal with a subject which, until the seventies, was largely ignored by scholars: Austria after the *Anschluss*, from 1938 to 1945. The first, Gerhard Botz's *Die Eingliederung Österreichs in das deutsche Reich*, was originally published in 1972 and appeared in a new edition in 1976. This short monograph, truly a pioneering essay, is considerably more successful than the same author's *Gewalt in der Politik*. Here everything is clearly and simply told; the study is an excellent, concise introduction to Austria's history as part of the Third Reich.

The book is conceived as a case study in the “style” of Nazi leadership

and policy formulation. Botz argues that Austria—where the party came to power suddenly and the bureaucracy, Church, and army were compromised by association with the unpopular Schuschnigg dictatorship—was used by the NSDAP as a laboratory for testing the idea of the full-blown party state. The policies initiated in Austria between 1938 and 1940, then, foreshadowed what was to come in Germany and German-controlled Europe.

Botz contends that while Hitler had certain general goals and guiding principles concerning Austria—especially the economic role it would play in his new order—he had no precisely defined timetable for *Anschluss* nor clearly formulated blueprint for administrative *Gleichschaltung*. This lack of detailed planning, which led to inconsistency and contradiction in execution, was typical of Nazi leadership, which was “by no means monolithic.” From early 1934, Hitler generally followed an “evolutionary” strategy, designed to gradually undermine Austria from within, without the need for force. This policy was continuous through February 1938, although it was accelerated in late 1937, as Hitler became convinced that Britain would not take a stand on the question of Austrian independence. The meeting with Schuschnigg at Berchtesgaden represents the culmination of this evolutionary strategy—union through pressure rather than military conquest—because it made Austria, in effect, a German satellite. It was only Schuschnigg’s “final act of desperation,” the surprise announcement of a plebiscite on Austrian independence for March 13, which prompted Hitler to veer suddenly in favor of an invasion. And only after the invasion had begun—in the face of weak reaction abroad and, perhaps, his enthusiastic reception in Linz—did the Führer decide to break completely with the evolutionary course in favor of immediate, total *Anschluss*, with no transitional phase.

The invasion was followed by a *Behördenkrieg*, and Botz presents a clear overview of this tangle of rivalries involving moderates and radicals in the Austrian Nazi camp, Frick (the Reich interior minister), Bürckel (Hitler’s special commissioner), and Keppler (the agent of Göring’s Four-Year Plan). An important part of his message here has to do with Hitler’s “social Darwinian” leadership style, based on the idea that the war of all against all would produce the best administrators, i.e., the stronger and more ruthless.

As for the broad shape which administrative *Anschluss* would take, Hitler’s key decisions were not made before late April. He knew that the initial enthusiasm for union would give way to localism and his

long-range solution to this problem was the reorganization of Austria into four *Reichsgaue*, which implied the destruction not only of “Austria,” but of the traditional provinces as well. Ironically, many of the Nazis’ antifederalist ideas had already been worked out by liberal advocates of *Anschluss* in the 1920s, such as Hans Kelsen. Ultimately, power would reside in the hands of party men, directly responsible to Berlin. Thus, Austria would serve as a model for administrative revolution in Germany as a whole; the ultimate goal was the final triumph of centralization over the age-old problem of German particularism. As an Austrian himself, however, Hitler understood the depth of provincial loyalties in Austria, and intervened from time to time to brake the centralizing policies of the Rhineland *Bürckel*, the eventual victor in the bureaucratic war. In fact, provincial patriotism was too strong to permit full implementation of the plan before the outbreak of war.

This leads us to Radomír Luža’s much broader study of Austria after 1938, the last and, after Schausberger’s survey, the most significant of the works under review. The “unifying theme and focal point of reference” of Luža’s book is the “emergence of Austrian self-consciousness” in reaction to the experience of Nazi *Gleichschaltung* and the horrors of Hitler’s war. Although written by an American scholar, it, too, is a contribution to the literature of “building an Austrian nation,” implicitly supporting the present social and political order in central Europe. Like Botz, Luža approaches his subject as a case study, pointing up the “relevance of the Austrian problems to a broader understanding of the nature and general style of National Socialism”; Austria was a “testing ground for long-range party aspirations.”

Luža’s emphasis is political and administrative; he covers certain facets of the story only briefly—the plight of the Jews, the role of the Catholic Church, the resistance—because, he maintains, they have already been covered in depth elsewhere. His style is sometimes too expansive, and occasionally he lapses into the familiar clichés of Austrian cultural distinctiveness. It is true, of course, that many Austrians genuinely believe their culture to be uniquely “mellow,” “refined,” or “humane,” and to this extent hackneyed sentiment tells us something about the Austrian sense of self-identity. But the fact that people believe their own stereotypes does not make them valid and, in fact, Luža’s own observations about Austrian behavior during the war seem to contradict them, as we shall see. It should be stressed, however, that Luža’s analysis is, on the whole, discerning.



Luža's account of Austria's role in Germany's general European and strategic order complements that of Schausberger, and completes Botz's sketch of the mechanics of *Anschluss*. He presents a judicious, often sympathetic account of the motives and illusions of the Austrian Nazis and Nazi sympathizers; his portraits of individuals are not one-dimensional, but are done in more than one shade of grey. The overall picture of the new order and the new elite is still one of dismal bureaucratic war. But it is in those passages which deal with the population in general—the anonymous masses who “offered or were forced to offer frightful sacrifices for the National Socialist cause”—that Luža is at his most penetrating and profound. His picture of the Austrian majority under the Third Reich—“proletarian” or “bourgeois,” to cite the cant of ideology and social analysis—is not flattering, whether the people are portrayed as celebrants in the “explosion of collective joy” of March–April 1938, or as spectators in February 1945, who “still watched hopefully as the fresh, well-equipped German divisions rolled . . . on their way to the Hungarian front.” “The Nazi regime,” Luža writes, “cannot be treated as an isolated phenomenon in the history of Austria.” He speaks of an “affirmative consensus among the majority of the population until the battle of Stalingrad,” and asserts that even after 1943 support for the regime was at least “lukewarm.” Even in the last months, there was “no widespread popular resistance,” and the stability of the regime continued to rest on the “massive inertia” of the populace. In short, the people of Austria behaved no differently from the majority of other Germans. Only in the eleventh hour did they seek “shelter in an awareness of their own distinctiveness and individuality. While generally ready to profit by the German victories, they strove assiduously to disengage themselves from grossdeutsch sentiments in the hour of distress and of imminent threat to their lives. The idea of an independent Austria won new importance in the course of Germany's defeat, not during the time of its success. Modern Austria was as much the child of expediency as of strategy and moral principles.”

Following the war, fortune accorded Austria a special place in international affairs. Allied policy, based on strategic considerations and rationalized by the half-truth that Austria was the first “victim” of Nazi aggression, allowed the Alpine state to escape the full rigors of wardship imposed on the north. Once again, as after 1918, Austria attained independence “almost despite itself.” The process of denazification was slow and incomplete; the half-million registered former Nazi party

members—together with their immediate families, about one-quarter of the total population—outnumbered the membership of the largest postwar party, and politicians were wary of offending this potentially important pool of votes. As a result “the democratic regime did not resort to a thorough examination of Austria’s National Socialist past and showed great restraint—hitting back at Hitler and his Austrian henchmen but playing down the anti-Nazi rhetoric and disregarding any consideration of Austria’s share of the Nazi activities. Basically it viewed Austrian Nazism as an import from Germany and failed to acknowledge its Austrian roots.” Against the background of this climate of “smug assurance,” one wonders if it was not actually fear of Soviet domination rather than the memory of Hitler which nourished the growth of Austrian state and national consciousness after 1945.

Perhaps it is in this melancholy picture that we should seek the sobering human significance of the Austrian experience since 1918, and not in the false solemnity of pseudotragedy. Tragedy requires a hero; heroes can be discovered, perhaps, in the history of Habsburg Austria before 1918, but they are difficult to find in the period between 1918 and 1945. The material of the Austrian story, it seems, is more properly related to the ironic mode of Hannah Arendt’s “banality of evil” than to the lofty seriousness of tragedy.

But if banality and tragedy are incompatible, banality and comedy are not, and it is on a note of comic resolution that Luža concludes his story. Paradoxically—and this is one of Luža’s central themes—National Socialism acted as a “modernizing ideology” in the Austrian context. Interwar Austria was “still essentially semi-feudal . . . with its retarded social preoccupations and stabilized class structure” and its economy based on small-scale production. National Socialism undermined this anachronistic order and laid the foundations for large-scale industrialization; after 1945, “Austria was on its own with a reoriented economy and a social structure largely free of the quasifeudal shackles of the powerful old conservative order.” These revolutionary changes made possible, in turn, the psychological basis for a new confidence in the state; Austria’s leaders were now ready to accept the idea that independence was a necessity, and economically desirable as well. Thus, Luža adapts to Austria the currently widespread view of Hitler’s significance for Germany as a whole, which has been cogently expressed by Gordon Craig: “In his career of self-aggrandizement, while destroying much that was good in Germany and many thousands of people who might



have made that good better, Hitler also eliminated much that was bad. . . . He destroyed the basis of the traditional resistance to modernity and liberalism just as completely as he had destroyed the structure of the *Rechtsstaat* and democracy. . . . Hitler . . . not only restored to [the Germans] the options that they had had a century earlier but . . . also bequeathed to them the memory of horror to help them with their choice.”<sup>2</sup>

2. Gordon A. Craig, *Germany 1866–1945* (New York, 1978), pp. 763–64.