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The "Long Shadow" of the State: Austrian Social History in the 20th Century, 1890-1990 - German - Book Review

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Conference Group for Central European History of the American Historical
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Der lange Schatten des Staates: Österreichische Gesellschaftsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert,
1890–1990 by Ernst Hanisch

Review by: Harry Ritter

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Der lange Schatten des Staates: Österreichische Gesellschaftsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert, 1890–1990. By Ernst Hanisch. Vienna: Ueberreuter. 1994. Pp. 599. öS 740.00. ISBN 3–8000–3520–0.

Ernst Hanisch's new survey of Austrian *Zeitgeschichte* is one of the first volumes to appear in Ueberreuter Verlag's projected ten volume history of Austria from ancient times to the present, edited by Herwig Wolfram. If the other contributions equal this work in quality, the series will be a brilliant success. Hanisch's book will be a touchstone for all future efforts to synthesize and extract meaning from Austria's turbulent twentieth-century experience. The study is lavishly illustrated in both black and white and color, and liberally sprinkled with statistical tables relating to Austria's economic, social, and demographic history—all of which form an integral part of its rhetorical design (the tables usually compare Austrian development with trends in Germany and Switzerland). Though beautifully produced, this is not just an attractive panorama, nor yet another evocation of Habsburg nostalgia or contribution to the post-1945 political project of building a distinctive (i. e., non-German) "Austrian identity." Over the past twenty years Hanisch, a Salzburg historian, has earned a reputation as one of the leading students of the First Austrian Republic and Dollfuss-Schuschnigg and Nazi dictatorships, concentrating mainly on the local history of the Salzburg region. In a post-Waldheim setting, the spirit behind his work is summed up in the last sentence of the book: "It is the noblest duty of history to stand watch on the critical memory of a society." In fulfilling this task his text, in its analytical and narrative power, matches the publisher's superb production standards.

Methodologically, the book falls into two parts. The first third, roughly, constitutes a sweeping excavation of the deep structures of Austria's modern *longue durée*—cultural traditions, mental habits, demographic and economic trends, social classes, patterns of political behavior, attributes of elite and popular culture—reaching back to the conflicting legacies of the age of the Baroque and the Josefinian Enlightenment. (Despite formidable tensions between these two grand traditions, they nonetheless interlaced to cast the "long shadow" of bureaucratism and the state over subsequent Austrian history, right down to the present; equivocal in its implications, the shadow rendered Austrians ill-prepared for liberal democracy, yet in the long run eased the path to the late twentieth-century "social partnership" and today's social-liberal welfare society.) This highly generalized initial section is inspired by the *Annales* tradition of social history, informed by the concepts of "modernization" and "political culture," and marked by the employment of Weberian ideal types.

The last two thirds of the book unfold in a more conventional narrative of specific events and short-term processes from the 1890s to the mid-1980s. (Although he begins in the late imperial, multinational pe-

riod, Hanisch focuses throughout on Vienna and the Alpine regions that came to constitute the little Austria of the First and Second Republics.) Here the methods of sociological history continue to inform Hanisch's presentation, but they are complemented by a *geistesgeschichtlichen* tone arising from the author's affinity for the social-critical tradition in modern Austrian literature—from Karl Kraus and Robert Musil to Ingeborg Bachmann, Tomas Bernhard, and Peter Handke. This endows the text with a moralizing (yet always sober, self-critical, and scrupulously balanced) quality.

Drawing in this section on his own scholarship and the best recent work of other Austrian as well as non-Austrian scholars, Hanisch succinctly explains the ideological fractures which led to civil war and the collapse of the First Austrian Republic, the roots of Austrian anti-Semitism and mass support for *Anschluss* and the policies of the Third Reich, the post-1945 creation of an official myth around the half-truth of Austria's status as Hitler's "first victim" and associated repression of Austria's Nazi past, and discontinuities as well as continuities between Austria's Second Republic and the country's earlier history. Overall, this section is emplotted as an arduous, dialectical expansion of individual "life chances" (Ralf Dahrendorf's term) over against the deep-seated authoritarian and antiliberal structures of Austrian life—Catholic tradition, anti-Semitism, and authoritarian mindsets. The author, an avowed product of contemporary Austria's Catholic as opposed to Social Democratic or German National ideological traditions, affirms the progressive nature of this development, including the church's own retreat from high-profile politics in the post-1945 period. Yet his voice is modulated by a distinctly ironic tone relating to these liberalizing and emancipatory processes—one alert to the unheroic side of human behavior and mindful of the losses and future uncertainties as well as the gains produced by "modernization." In sum, anyone seeking a concise map of the contours and landmarks of contemporary Austrian history and a penetrating appraisal of its vital issues will be well advised to begin with this volume.

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The British Labour Party and the German Social Democrats, 1900–1931: A Comparative Study. By Stefan Berger. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1992. Pp. xiii + 302. \$ 55.00. ISBN 0-19-820500-7.

This is an exemplary monograph, a delight to read. It makes a well defined argument, is clearly written, and demonstrates a remarkable command of the relevant sources, both primary and secondary. Berger is unusually