

10-1996

# Controversies Concerning Austrian History. Repressed Past, Austrian Identity, Waldheim and the History – Book Review

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## Recommended Citation

Ritter, Harry, "Controversies Concerning Austrian History. Repressed Past, Austrian Identity, Waldheim and the History – Book Review" (1996). *History*. 30.

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## German Studies Association

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Kontroversen um Österreichs Zeitgeschichte. Verdrängte Vergangenheit, Österreich-Identität, Waldheim und die Historiker by Gerhard Botz; Gerald Sprengnagel

Review by: Harry Ritter

*German Studies Review*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Oct., 1996), pp. 605-606

Published by: [The Johns Hopkins University Press](#) on behalf of the [German Studies Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1432579>

Accessed: 29/10/2014 13:43

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into the political and social fabric, as more pressing. It speaks for the excellence of the contributions to the symposium that they avoided focusing exclusively on the Anschluss as foreign intervention and resisted the temptation of interpreting the time after the Anschluss as solely dominated by NS-terror, thereby leaving out the many areas of consensus with National Socialism existing in the Austrian people.

KURT TWERASER, *University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

Gerhard Botz and Gerald Sprengnagel, eds. *Kontroversen um Österreichs Zeitgeschichte. Verdrängte Vergangenheit, Österreich-Identität, Waldheim und die Historiker*. Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 1994. Pp. 586. Paper DM 118,—.

Most of the thirty-nine essays in this useful anthology were originally presented as papers at a two-day Salzburg symposium held in May 1987 at the height of the Waldheim affair and on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the Anschluss. By this time Salzburg—behind the leadership of Botz, Ernst Hanisch, and others—had become the major academic center for sane engagement with the painful issues surrounding Austria's history as part of the Third Reich between 1938 and 1945. In his foreword, Botz (symposium organizer, together with Hanisch and Gerald Sprengnagel) accurately characterized the book as a thematic and methodological stock-taking of the current state of *Zeitgeschichte* in Austria; thus, the volume will be essential reading for anyone interested in public discourse about that country's past.

For this volume, some of the original papers have been revised, and several key essays have been added, including Fritz Fellner's "Das Problem der österreichischen Nation nach 1945" and the late Karl Dietrich Erdmann's "*Die Spur Österreichs in der deutschen Geschichte*." Almost all of the contributions are stimulating and in some degree polemical, and (within the constraints of scholarly responsibility) they embrace a wide spectrum of political orientation, generational perspective, and informed opinion on Austria's recent past and the issues generated by the Waldheim Affair—from the views of Erika Weinzierl and Gerald Stourzh to those of Lothar Höbelt. A few non-Austrian voices are also included: Robert Knight of Great Britain and Peter Steinback, Hans Mommsen, and Karl Dietrich Bracher of Germany.

It is noteworthy that Botz begins his introduction to the volume by placing Austrian discussions of the Nazi era squarely in the broader context of recent German debates—the Fischer controversy, the *Sonderweg* debate, and the *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s. This is candid acknowledgment of the fact that, despite persistent, officially sanctioned efforts to invent a non- or trans-German past for Austria, both scholarly integrity and civic virtue require that Austria's twentieth-century history be contextualized as part and parcel of the history of the German

political, economic, and cultural area. Many participants in the symposium—Botz foremost among them—were preoccupied by the thought that *Zeitgeschichte* as practiced in Austria was in the grip of acute “crisis.” It was not merely that professional research had failed to adequately address Austrian complicity in the Nazi regime, or that scholarship had been cynically used to legitimate the consensualist neocorporatism of the Second Republic. A sense of despair arose from the fact that, despite a generation of much scholarly inquiry and outreach that actually *did* address the Nazi past, the Waldheim affair and its associated public discourses revealed that scant appreciation of this work had been transmitted to the media culture or public consciousness. The gap between professional history (with its emphasis on relentless respect for the past’s integrity, multicausal complexity, interpretive subtlety and nuance) and public historical awareness (which craves simplicity, stereotypes, and self-justifying pasts) is, of course, a universal dilemma. In his opening remarks to the symposium, Botz expressed the wish that the crisis might be the turning point toward recovery and new growth. There are, in fact, indications that these hopes may not have been entirely misplaced. One need only recall the speeches of Chancellor Vranitzky to the Austrian parliament (1991) and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1993), acknowledging aspects of Austrian participation in the Third Reich (printed at the end of Botz’s anthology), and the appearance of Ernst Hanisch’s *Der lange Schatten des Staates: Österreichische Gesellschaftsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert* (1994), a masterpiece of courageous synthesis which should be the benchmark for all future efforts to interpret Austria’s twentieth century history.

HARRY RITTER, *Western Washington University*

Michael Gehler and Rolf Steininger, eds. *Österreich und die europäische Integration 1945-1993* (Institut für Zeitgeschichte der Universität Innsbruck. Arbeitskreis Europäische Integration. Historische Forschungen. Veröffentlichungen, 1). Vienna, Cologne, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1993. Pp. 530. Cloth DM 89,—.

Zeitgerecht zur heißen Phase der Diskussion um die Art und Weise der Teilhabe Österreichs an einer verstärkten Form europäischer Integration im Umfeld der Europäischen Union nach 1989 legte das Institut für Zeitgeschichte der Universität Innsbruck eine umfassende historische Studie zur österreichischen Integrationspolitik nach 1945 vor. Im Rahmen der öffentlichen und veröffentlichten Diskussion im Vorfeld der Volksabstimmung zum Beitritt Österreichs zur Europäischen Union ist der vorliegende Band sicherlich eine der wichtigsten Diskussionsbeiträge. In fünf Kapiteln werden die Integrationspolitik und deren Bedeutung für Österreich im angesprochenen Zeitrahmen in allen bedeutsameren Aspekten von ausgewiesenen, oftmals jungen Wissenschaftlern untersucht. Es ist