

2012

Review of Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933-1938

Matthew P. Berg

John Carroll University, mberg@jcu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://collected.jcu.edu/hist-facpub>



Part of the [European History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Berg, Matthew P., "Review of Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933-1938" (2012). *History*. 38.
<http://collected.jcu.edu/hist-facpub/38>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Carroll Collected. It has been accepted for inclusion in History by an authorized administrator of Carroll Collected. For more information, please contact connell@jcu.edu.

Central European History

Volume 45

Number 4

2012

ARTICLES

Gustav Freytag, the *Reichsgründung*, and the National Liberal Origins of the *Sonderweg*
Larry L. Ping 605

The Loyal Genetic Doctor, Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer, and the *Institut für Erbbiologie und Rassenhygiene*: Origins, Controversy, and Racial Political Practice
Sheila Faith Weiss 631

Air Wars and Empire: Gandhi and the Search for a Usable Past in Postwar Germany
Andrew Oppenheimer 669

Cold-War Economics: The Use of Marshall Plan Counterpart Funds in Germany, 1948–1960
Armin Grünbacher 697

Piecework and the Sovietization of the East German Workplace
Wayne Geerling and Gary B. Magee 717

West German Protestants and the Campaign against Nuclear Technology
Michael Schüring 744

BOOK REVIEWS

Hillary Zmora, *The Feud in Early Modern Germany*
Peter H. Wilson 763

Lynne Tatlock, ed., *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany: Cross Disciplinary Perspectives*
Howard Louthan 765

BOOK REVIEWS

785

hiking association, the *Naturfreunde*, which will be familiar to readers of his excellent monograph *Turning to Nature in Germany: Hiking, Nudism, and Conservation, 1900–1940* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007). Williams is certainly correct when he observes that *Weimar Culture Revisited* challenges the “teleological, doom-laden narrative” of many works on the period. What it lacks, however, is a concluding chapter to bring together the book’s common themes and to suggest how the “Weimar Culture” paradigm might be usefully revised.

MATTHEW JEFFERIES
UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER
doi:10.1017/S0008938912000775

Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933–38. By Julie Thorpe. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press. 2011. Pp. xi + 259. Cloth \$95.00. ISBN 978-0-7190-7967-2.

The Austrofascist regime has attracted resurgent attention from Austrian and international historians recently, particularly among younger scholars. Julie Thorpe’s study is an ambitious and potentially significant contribution to what, over the next few years, should be the appearance of several new works on the period. She stakes her claim unambiguously, arguing that her work offers advances on our understanding of the *Ständestaat* in two key respects.

On the one hand, she is interested in the regime as a manifestation of fascism consistent with fundamental traits of Italian and German variants, rather than as an “authoritarian” system. The other line of argumentation involves exploration of pan-German sentiment across the Austrian political spectrum, especially the resonance this form of identity found in Catholic-conservative circles and within the Austrian NSDAP. Thorpe claims that the existence of far more pervasive pan-German sentiment than historians had been prepared to acknowledge presents a clear challenge to the theory that Austrian political culture in the Second Republic had been divided into roughly three camps: Socialist, Catholic Conservative, and German National. Instead, she contends that realities were more complex than this neat division would suggest. This tripartite configuration posited in 1954 by historian Adam Wandruszka, a former Nazi himself, identified a distinct and German National tradition rooted in the nineteenth century that eventually found expression in National Socialism. Thus, it followed, if Reich Germans were not foreigners, then Austrian *Parteigenossen* had not been traitors to Austria and the *Verband der Unabhängigen*, political home to so many former Nazis re-enfranchised in 1949, could be seen in this light as an organic part of modern Austrian political culture.

Thorpe introduces a number of important case studies to advance her position. These include the role of the press in Austrofascist and broader pan-German circles, investigations of minorities, Catholic refugees from Nazi Germany versus eastern European Jewish migrants, citizenship legislation, and an examination of the press and right-wing nationalist circles in Salzburg. She bases her work firmly in a wealth of important secondary sources, demonstrating a keen grasp of the literature throughout, especially in her initial chapter, which treats pan-Germanism from the imperial period into the First Republic. Her primary sources are mostly archived newspaper collections, ranging from the *Salzburger Volksblatt* in the relatively homogenous and politically conservative west, to the *Wiener Neueste Nachrichten* in the ethnically diverse and social democratic-dominated capital, to the *Grazer Tagespost*, a medium for pan-German concerns that included apprehension and hostility toward the Slovene minority in the south. Thorpe's choice of sources serves her focus on the intersection of cultural/intellectual and political currents, but readers may find that they limit her ability to advance her argument on the broader front she stakes out.

The volume's great strength lies in its thorough examination of prominent thinkers and opinion makers. Thorpe identifies a representative range—some of whom advanced a distinctly Catholic, Austrian notion of essential Germanness (e.g., Richard Schmitz), while others either advanced an understanding of German identity that allowed them to build bridges to Austrian National Socialists despite misgivings over Nazi violence (e.g., Hans Glaser), or preoccupied themselves with the place of foreigners and Jews in a Christian-German Austria (the Jesuit Georg Bichlmair). Another of Thorpe's valuable contributions is her linkage of antisemitism and foreignness as she explores the "Ostjude" and assimilated Jews in the context of immigration and citizenship over significant portions of three chapters. The figures on whom she concentrates played important roles as advisors to the Austrofascist regime; some held political office, and others played active roles in the church or in print media.

These strengths notwithstanding, it is unfortunate Thorpe does not carry her investigation into precisely how these individuals' perspectives influenced policy formation, or the extent to which journalists and newspaper editors actually shaped popular attitudes—or gave voice to them. In the first instance, for example, her discussion of immigration law refers in passing to "official debates" (p. 213), but never elaborates on their substance or demonstrates the influence of her subjects on the course of such discussion. Indeed, she does not draw on sources such as protocols from ministerial meetings or inner- and inter-departmental communications that might help readers appreciate the role that pan-German thinkers played on policy makers.

In the second instance, Thorpe does not offer a methodological approach sufficient to support her suggestion that newspaper editors and journalists served as

opinion makers. Although she draws extensively on Kurt Paupié's 1960 study on Austrian newspaper circulation (pp. 46–53), she acknowledges that these figures do not alone account for a significant number of readers who did not purchase papers, but relied instead on *Kaffeehaus* or publically posted copies. Moreover, Thorpe approached newspapers "as a contemporary reader might have done: skimming headlines, pausing to digest articles on important topics, rereading some reports for evidence of doublespeak or the censor's heavy hand, checking the cinema schedule, admiring the latest fashions and glancing through the obituaries for a familiar name" (p. 8). Yet this does not help us appreciate which articles readers would have found important or whether they would have been as interested in censorship as the historian is. Ultimately, Thorpe does not contest Paupié's general correlation of circulation with political allegiance. Because Nazis and pan-German *Ständestaat* supporters still read party-specific newspapers, it would seem that milieu played a more significant role in identity than Thorpe is prepared to acknowledge. While she may, in fact, be correct that the *Lager* theory requires revision, the shortcomings of her methodology do not permit a conclusive challenge to it here. If we knew more about popular reception of her selected newspapers' pan-Germanism, perhaps as articulated in average readers' perceptions of community and outsiders, we might better appreciate how pan-German principles and politics provided points of contact (and friction) between Austrofascists and Nazis (p. 88). This would require a rather different approach, one that probes the intersection of a more formal cultural/intellectual history with *Alltagsgeschichte*, and would call for other kinds of sources (e.g., police reports of political meetings, petitions, or other correspondence to the authorities that demonstrate citizens participated in pan-German discourse).

Despite this criticism, Thorpe offers valuable insights into pan-German elites' perceptions of Reich Germans, *Auslandsdeutsche*, and Austrian minority populations in an excellent chapter. And, while some readers might wish for a more intentional treatment of the Austrian vs. European fascist regimes, Thorpe draws parallels to Italian and German press and citizenship laws and to Michael Mann's discussion of ethnic nationalism as "organic and cleansing" (p. 5) with respect to Nazism quite effectively. On the whole the book is a more solid contribution than the bold one it strives to be, but this should not diminish its strengths. The author has raised key questions about nationalist ideology during the Austrofascist period, and future studies would do well to take them up.

MATTHEW P. BERG
JOHN CARROLL UNIVERSITY
doi:10.1017/S0008938912000787