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Petronilla Ehrenpreis. *Kriegs- und Friedensziele im Diskurs: Regierung und deutschsprachige Öffentlichkeit Österreich-Ungarns während des Ersten Weltkriegs.* Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2005. 514 S. EUR 54.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-7065-4096-4.

Reviewed by Eric Kurlander (Department of History, Stetson University)

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The Perils of Discursive 'Balkanization'

This assiduously researched monograph fills a significant gap in the literature on Austrian political culture during the First World War.[1] Drawing on a vast array of sources, this volume approaches the war aims debate as a palimpsest whose many layers reveal the wider "politischen sowie die bisher unerforschten pressepolitischen Rahmenbedingungen dieses Diskurses, die kriegsspezifischen Kommunikationsstrukturen" (p. 14). The author delves into matters of constitutional reform and nationality conflict as well, weaving together a penetrating analysis of domestic politics with a thorough survey of Austro-Hungarian foreign policy. The dense and detailed narrative is divided into two distinct phases, the era of censorship and repression from July 1914 until November 1916, which preceded Kaiser Karl I's accession and his appointment of Prince Ottokar von Czernin as Foreign Minister, and the post-Czernin era of December 1916-October 1918, which was characterized by improving civil liberties and renewed parliamentary activity. In part a response to changing circumstances, Ehrenpreis argues, Czernin's new course also reflected the crown's desire to conciliate a polarized German-language *Ãffentlichkeit* in the interest of international peace and domestic stability. But when the worsening military and related ethnopolitical situation forced the Foreign Minister's resignation in April 1918, the Donau monarchy lost control of an increasingly self-confident public sphere, abetting its own destruction.

The first part of the book examines public opinion in the wake of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination by Serbian nationalists on June 28, 1914. This period of escalating international tension known as the "July Crisis" was viewed by many Austrians as merely "einer weiteren Belastungsprobe in den Ã¶sterreichisch-ungarish-serbischen Beziehungen" (p. 61). Few expected war. Nevertheless, unlike previous Balkan crises, during which the Austrian public had generally opposed military intervention, the bourgeois press was nearly unanimous in supporting punitive action against Serbia. According to Ehrenpreis, it was this popular bellicosity, motivated by years of faltering confidence in Emperor Franz Josef II's regime, which pushed the government to pursue a hard line. Convinced that an aggressive foreign policy was the only way to bind an increasingly disparate Austro-Hungarian population to the monarchy,

the crown hoped for quick victory in a localized conflict. For, as the German ambassador in Vienna noted, the Austro-Hungarian government had little understanding of the modern propaganda techniques required to manipulate public opinion, like carefully edited film reels or well-staged press conferences. By reacting to public opinion instead of shaping it, the Austrian crown plunged Europe into world war.

After the outbreak of hostilities the Austro-Hungarian government tried to manage public opinion in traditional fashion: through censorship. Though Austrian censorship laws were much stronger than those of England, France or Germany, they were never applied consistently. Not only did the Transleithanian bureaucracy retain control over the press east of the Leith River. But Cisleithanian censorship policy was divided between state and military administrations. The former frequently complained of usurpations by the latter. To make matters worse, the chief of the Austrian Literary Bureau, Oskar Ritter von Montlong, waited some months before undertaking a campaign to counter foreign propaganda that Austrian aggression had provoked the First World War. When he eventually did react, Montlong's attempts to organize "press conferences" along western lines were unimpressive. Finally, Austrians could always publish their ideas in German papers, most of which were accessible in Vienna or Budapest. It is little wonder that a strict regime of censorship could not survive the middle years of the war.

With the press muzzled and the parliament suspended, many Austrians sought an alternative "private sphere" in which to exchange ideas. In a matter of weeks a variety of unofficial discussion circles arose across civil society. Formed in October 1914, the Austrian state archivist Hans Schlitter's "Tuesday-Circle" included a number of conservative members of the Foreign and Interior Ministry, the Jewish liberal publisher Gustav Stolper and Thomas Masaryk, the future president of Czechoslovakia. This political and ethnic diversity did little to evoke consensus. While some vague agreement emerged regarding the necessity of constitutional reform, combating antisemitism and a tariff union with Germany, the group failed to iron out basic principles regarding the most mundane matters. A second group was led by Edmund Steinacker, the representative of the German minority in Hungary. Like the Schlitter-Circle, the Steinacker group was critical of the 1867 *Ausgleich* with Hungary, desiring greater administrative centralization between the Trans- and Cisleithanian halves of the empire and a return to great power status through closer military, diplomatic and economic ties with Germany. A third discussion circle, led by the liberal historian and publisher Heinrich Friedjung, was especially preoccupied with the question of *AnschluÃ*. Borrowing from the liberal German imperialist Friedrich Naumann's conception of a German-dominated *Mitteleuropa*, the group hoped that "eine enge Verbindung mit dem Deutschen Reich ... die Donaumonarchie auch seiner inneren Bestimmung, ein NationalitÃ¤tenstaat unter deutschÃ¶sterreichischer FÃ¼hrung zu werden, wieder nÃ¤herbringen [wÃ¼rde]" (p. 153). Born of two liberal politicians, Gustav Marchet and Joseph Maria Baernreither, the Marchet Circle was the most intellectually coherent of these half-dozen discussion groups. But like those of the other circles, its basic principles included domestic reform and a closer union with Germany.

All of these groups discussed territorial annexations to some extent. Ehrenpreis suggests a difference in emphasis, however, in comparison to German aims during the first two years of the war. While German intellectuals focused on a *Siegfrieden* encompassing massive territorial annexations, Austrians were more interested in questions of internal reform and a peace of understanding, or *VerstÃ¤ndigungsfrieden*. A minority in their own empire, perhaps the latter recognized the values of diplomacy and self-determination better than their German *confrÃ¨res*. These discussion circles may have lacked ideological coherence. In changing the terms of the debate, however, they provided concrete alternatives to the "vague conceptions" of war and peace promulgated in official government circles.[2]

At times Ehrenpreis seems to downplay the degree to which the Austrian crown embraced relatively modest war aims from the beginning of the war. Yet there is no denying the fact that Franz Joseph's government did a poor job of propagating these demands. Thus Karl I's accession and his appointment of the charismatic Czernin as Foreign Minister inaugurated a new era in Austrian foreign and domestic policy. From the moment he took office, Czernin made sure the fundamental differences between Austrian moderation and German annexationism became transparent. While the indignant German Kaiser ordered unrestricted submarine warfare, Czernin redoubled his efforts to secure public support for a peace without annexations. Relaxing the censor, Czernin hoped the press, parliament and unofficial discussion circles would reward his political largesse with unqualified support. He also replaced the reactionary Montlong with a more pliant Dr. Ritter von Wiesner as head of the Literary Bureau. Convinced that Austria-Hungary

could not win an extended campaign against the Entente, but wary of eliciting accusations of defeatism, Czernin developed the clever slogan, "Ãsterreich-Ungarn sei nicht zu vernichten und wolle auch nicht vernichten" (p. 213). He then provided additional funding for Wiesner to push this point of view in papers standing nearer the crown. Czernin's liberalization of press and politics, including his decision to reopen parliament, improved the crown's popularity considerably. But it also put "staatlichen Kriegspolitik in allen Bereichen, von der staatlichen Meinungslenkung und der Kriegswirtschaft angefangen bis zur AuÃenpolitik auf dem Ã¶ffentlichen PrÃ¼fstand" (p. 201). Once opened, Ehrenpreis suggests, the pandora's box of public opinion would prove difficult to control and impossible to close.

Not to be outpaced by his own press or the German Reichstag, which issued a Peace Resolution on July 20, 1917, Czernin initiated a public relations offensive meant to highlight the crown's increasingly moderate war aims. Throughout July and August he gave a series of speeches articulating Austria's demands for a peace without annexations, a European conference on disarmament and an international court of justice. On more than one occasion Czernin suggested a parallel liberalization of Austro-Hungarian domestic politics. Weary of war and pessimistic about Austria's chances for a *Siegfrieden*, even the Pan-Germans threw in their support for a peace without extensive annexations by the end of 1917. Hence, without recourse to the censor, the charismatic prime minister had managed to unite the increasingly volatile and disparate elements of Austrian public opinion, from the Socialists to the Pan-Germans, in the interests of international peace and domestic reform.

In the wake of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, however, this fragile coalition disintegrated. The Austrian Socialists and national minorities were incensed that the German empire, with little opposition from Austria-Hungary, had imposed an exceedingly harsh territorial settlement on V.I. Lenin's nascent Soviet Union. The Pan-Germans, meanwhile, felt that Austria's piece of the Russian pie was inadequate. Czernin fragmented public opinion further with an April 1918 speech, his last, urging Pan-German "Annexionisten," Socialist "Friedenshysteriker" and separatist "Masaryks" to become more realistic about Austria's prospects for victory on the one hand and domestic reform on the other. Intended to stem the increasing balkanization of the Austro-Hungarian public sphere, the speech had much the opposite effect. Even the relatively moderate Czechs now demanded political autonomy, while the Socialists and Pan-Germans distanced themselves from the government. After French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau produced a document revealing Czernin's duplicitous negotiating strategy in March 1918, the so-called Sixtus-Affair, Czernin's peaceful course was doomed [3].

Indeed, the Sixtus-Affair is one of the few places where the author may overestimate the importance of domestic public opinion. The foreign minister's popularity among German-speaking Austrians remained exceptionally high in March 1918, as Ehrenpreis concedes. Even in the wake of Brest-Litovsk, Czernin proved remarkably adept at reconciling the disparate ethnic and social forces that made up Austro-Hungarian public opinion. From the perspective of domestic politics alone, his *dÃ©mission* hurt the crown more than it helped. One might reasonably draw the conclusion that Czernin was not cashiered because of his inability to manipulate public opinion, but as a scapegoat for Karl I's own star-crossed diplomacy.

With Czernin gone and the Crown's credibility nearly exhausted, it was left to the Austro-Hungarian parliament and upper house to direct debates on war and peace productively. But the major political parties and economic interest groups had only just emerged from three long years of political hibernation and were desperate to retain what was left of their exhausted constituencies. None could afford to support a weakening crown.

Though the government did establish a Zentralbureau fÃ¼r Feindesabwehr in July 1918, Ehrenpreis dismisses this step as a well-meaning gesture, which "in diesem fortgeschrittenen Stadium keine Aussicht auf Erfolg mehr hatte" (p. 277). It was the Entente that instead took the discursive offensive in summer 1918. In August the British government proclaimed Czechoslovakia an independent member of the Entente. In September Clemenceau offered Thomas Masaryk the platform to declare a free and independent Czechoslovakia. The Polish, Ukrainian and South Slavic nationalities followed suit with similar declarations in early October. When German Austrians formed their own provisional national assembly on October 21, the Austrian empire had, for all intents and purposes, ceased to exist.

In the conclusion, Ehrenpreis devotes two dozen pages to the role played by the German-language public sphere in dissolving the crown and declaring the new Austrian republic. But this superficial summary only begins to address complex social and political circumstances that defined the last few months of the empire and first few months of the Austrian republic. Although

impeccably researched and articulated, Ehrenpreis's interpretation likewise places too much emphasis on the fragmentation of the public sphere *per se.*[4] The Austro-Hungarian empire's disintegration might be attributed in no small part to the same escalating social tensions, economic privations and devastating military setbacks that undermined a more patently democratic and ethnically homogeneous German Reich. Finally, the reader would benefit immensely from an index. Nevertheless, in providing an indispensable complement to the extensive literature on wartime political culture in imperial Germany, this volume is a welcome contribution to the field.[5]

Notes

[1]. The four most important precursors to this study remain unpublished. See Klaus Mayer, *Die Organisation des Kriegspressequartiers beim k.u.k. Armeeoberkommando im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Ph.D. diss., Vienna, 1963); Hildegard SchmÃ¶lzer, *Die Propaganda des Kriegspressequartiers im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914-1918*(Ph.D. diss., Vienna, 1965); Gustav Spann, *Zensur in Ãsterreich wÃ¤hrend des I. Weltkrieges 1914-1918* (Ph.D. diss., Vienna, 1972); Franz Rottensteiner, *Das 'Literarische Bureau'. Pressepolitik, Organisation und Wirksamkeit 1877-1918* (Ph.D. diss., Vienna, 1967). The few published works on Austrian propaganda are hardly comprehensive. See, for example, Tamara Griesser-PeÃar, *Die Mission Sixtus. Ãsterreichs Friedensversuch im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna : Amalthea, 1988); Mark Cornwall, *The Undermining of Austria-Hungary: The Battle for Hearts and Minds* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

[2]. Austria's extra-parliamentary discussion circles offered "nicht nur vage Vorstellungen sondern den politischen EntscheidungstrÃ¤gern konkrete Wege zu deren Durchsetzung an die Hand zu geben. Diese Intention teilten alle Diskussionszirkel, wenn auch nur wenigen die Entwicklung von Gesamtprogramm gelang" (p. 184).

[3]. The Sixtus Affair was the culmination of the Austrian emperor's effort to negotiate a separate peace with the Entente. It began when Czernin delivered a series of secret letters suing for peace to Clemenceau through Karl I's brother-in-law, Prince Sixtus of Bourbon-Parma. The letters detailed Karl's willingness to make numerous concessions in order to obtain peace, including the surrender of their German ally's province of Alsace-Lorraine to the French. Clemenceau had the good sense to keep the documents quiet until a provocative speech by Czernin in early 1918 caused Clemenceau to break off the negotiations and publish the letters in full. The revelation of Karl's numerous concessions severely undermined the crown's reputation at home and abroad. See Elisabeth Kovacs, *Untergang oder Rettung der Donaumonarchie? Die Ãsterreichische Frage. Kaiser und KÃ¶nig Karl I. (IV.) und die Neuordnung Mitteleuropas* (Vienna: BÃ¶hlau, 2004); Eva Demmerle, *Kaiser Karl I. "Selig, die Frieden stiften"* (Vienna: Amalthea, 2004); Peter Broucek, *Karl I (IV). Der politische Weg des letzten Herrschers der Donaumonarchie* (Vienna: Bohlau, 1997); Heinz von Lichem, *Karl I. Ein Kaiser sucht den Frieden* (Innsbruck: Tyrolea, 1996); Robert Kann, *Die SixtusaffÃ¤re und die geheimen Friedensverhandlungen Ãsterreich-Ungarns im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich: Verlag fÃ¼r Geschichte und Politik, 1966).

[4]. "Im Gegenteil, nicht die zusammenfÃ¼hrung der Ã¶sterreichischen-ungarischen TeilÃ¶ffentlichkeiten durch eine verbindende Propaganda mit einigenden Ziel hatte der Krieg gebracht, sondern die immer deutlicher werdende Abgrenzung groÃer Teile der deutschen von der magyarischen Ãffentlichkeit und umgekehrt, groÃer Teile der tschechischen, polnischen, sÃ¼dslawischen BevÃ¶lkerung von der deutschen und ungarischen Ãffentlichkeit" (p. 390).

[5]. See Steffan Bruendel, *Volksgemeinschaft oder Volksstaat. Die "Ideen von 1914" und die Neuordnung Deutschlands im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Akademie, 2003); Jens P. Ackermann, *Die Geburt des modernen Propagandakrieges im Ersten Weltkrieg. Dietrich SchÃ¤fer, Gelehrter und Politiker* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2004); Anne Lipp, *Meinungslenkung im Krieg. Kriegserfahrungen deutscher Soldaten und ihre Deutung 1914-1918* (GÃ¶ttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003); Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003); Eberhard Demm, *Ostpolitik und Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2002); Ulrike Oppelt, *Film und Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002); Elke Kimmel, *Methoden antisemitischer Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg. Die Presse des Bundes der Landwirte* (Berlin: Metropole, 2001); David Welch, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War, 1914-1918* (London: Athlone, 2000); JÃ¼rgen and Wolfgang von Ungern-Sternberg, *Der Aufruf "An die Kulturwelt!"* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996); Wolfgang Mommsen, ed., *Kultur und Krieg* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996); Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and, less well received, Kurt Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung* (Berlin: A. Fest, 2000).

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