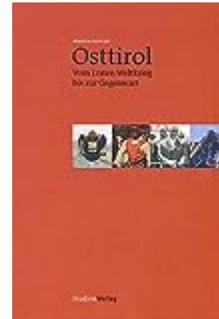




**Martin Kofler.** *Osttirol: Vom Ersten Weltkrieg bis zur Gegenwart.* Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2005. 325 pp. EUR 29.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-7065-1876-5.



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## Austrian Local History

Martin Kofler presents in this book a comprehensive history of East Tyrol, an isolated district of Austrian Tyrol bordering the Italian South Tyrol to the West and South, and the Austrian provinces of Carinthia and Salzburg with no direct border to North Tyrol. This is a very localized history; its target audience is “jede Osttirolerin und jeder Osttiroler von 8 bis 80” (p. 7), which prevents this book from being a rigorous scholarly publication. This volume is, however, not without merit. Kofler presents many very interesting photographs and images on East Tyrol’s history from World War I to the present, often depicting high-ranking officials on their visits to the district. He also does not shy away from discussing the Austro-fascist and Nazi periods. In fact, a third of the book addresses this period. It is not all completely new material, though, as Kofler published *Osttirol im Dritten Reich, 1938-1945* with the same publisher only nine years earlier.

East Tyrol or the district (*Bezirk*) of Lienz became noteworthy after South Tyrol was taken over by Italy, which severed East Tyrol from North Tyrol. The Nazis, who arrived in East Tyrol only five days after *Anschluß*

on March 16, 1938, reallocated East Tyrol to the *Reichsgau* of Carinthia, while North Tyrol and Vorarlberg were also combined into one *Gau*. After the Second Republic was founded, East Tyrol was returned to Tyrol in October 1947, after two and a half years. The British occupation forces were concerned about the fact that North Tyrol was occupied by the French and that this province was now going to be controlled by two Allied forces. Remoteness from Vienna and relative lack of importance certainly did not speed up the matter. Apart from transportation history, such as the Felbertauernstrasse and the Pustertal railroad, very little happened in East Tyrol in the Second Republic until 1998, when the Schengen treaty removed border controls to Italy, which has proved to be economically very beneficial and eased the sense of remoteness.

The strength of the book lies in the thoroughness of depicting East Tyrol’s history during the two fascist regimes. This is, however, material that Kofler presented in an earlier publication. The Catholic Church played a pervasive role in the district and may have contributed to a very slightly less enthusiastic reception for the Nazis.

However, does it really matter that 1.32 percent of East Tyroleans voted against *Anschluß*? While this may have been the highest percentage of votes opposed to the *Anschluß* in the Tyrol, it by no means points to a major opposition, nor to a real difference from the rest of Austria. The four Jewish Austrians in East Tyrol at the time of the annexation managed to emigrate; two non-Jewish East Tyroleans were murdered by the Nazis for helping Jews cross the border to Italy. While this may be an interesting fact, Kofler fails to explain that these cases were exceptional. It would be easy to read this volume and view East Tyroleans as victims of National Socialism. He certainly writes about the East Tyrolean Nazi leaders, but one gets

a sense that they were exceptional in the district. This is a weakness of the text.

Another weakness of this book is the brief bibliography and the unfortunate fact that printing expenses for this book were supported by various Austrian and Italian government bodies at the federal and regional level. Their logos are clearly printed on page four and one wonders how impartial an historian dependent on such funds can be. Nonetheless, this book is an interesting read on local Austrian history and should prove to be of some interest, particularly to historians interested in Tyrol and European borderlands since 1918.

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