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Christian Scharf. *Ausgleichspolitik und Pressekampf in der Ö?ra Hohenwart: die Fundamentalartikel von 1871 und der deutsch-tschechische Konflikt in BÖ¶hmen.* Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1996. 220 pp. ATS 569 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-486-56147-0.

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Hohenwart, the Bohemian Ausgleich, and the Rise of Popular Nationalism

Christian Scharf begins his introduction with a 1902 quotation from Karl Renner: "Die Laender zerreissen die Nationen, kein Wunder, dass die Nationen die Laender zerreissen wollen."[1] From this point of departure, Scharf describes Bohemia as a political union enclosing two peoples (*Voelker*) "against their will, clashing again and again and more and more violently in their national interests" (p. 11). This, Scharf explains, is an occurrence which at present can be observed ever more clearly in the lands of eastern Europe.

The central problem, as laid out in Scharf's introduction, is that the political borders of the region do not correspond to the "ethnic realities," a problem which the people (*Voelker*), however, attempt to correct in the political structure. In Scharf's perspective, the underlying difficulty in Bohemia is the "unasked for" political union of the two "peoples." Again, Scharf resorts to a turn of the century quotation, this one by Eduard Fuchs, to describe the cohabitation of Czechs and Germans in Bohemia as "deprimierende(s) Wueten im eigenen Fleische."[2] A notion of ethnic relations as composed of static national identities, opposing national interests, and a growing national animosity constitute the postulates upon which this work is based. Hence Scharf's description of the wartime German occupation of Bohemia and the subsequent expulsion of the Sudeten Germans as "only the conclusion of a process" (p. 11).

The work at hand, however, deals directly with the events and conditions surrounding the 1871 attempt of Minister-President Karl Sigmund Graf Hohenwart to conclude a Bohemian Ausgleich that would provide Bohemia with administrative autonomy within the Monarchy. The policy proposed a new nationalities law and electoral law for the diet that would have improved the Czechs national position within the province. Scharf identifies this event as the last attempt to introduce a federative system in the Habsburg Monarchy, ending the period of administrative experimentation which began in 1859/60, and an example of "the influence of a political policy, and especially the press, upon the formation of an individual way of life for Bohemia's German and Czech speakers, i.e. to strengthen German and Czech national consciousness" (p. 14).

Scharf pursues two goals: to explain, in greater detail than is currently available in a single secondary work the course of events that led to the Ausgleich policy and its ultimate failure, and to "illustrate the meaning of the

Hohenwart period for the development of German-Czech relations" (p. 15). Regarding this matter, Scharf contends that the press had an influence not only upon the development of national consciousness, but also on government policy.

The book is divided into five parts of three chapters each. Part One deals with the internal development of the Habsburg Monarchy and Bohemia during the 1860s. Part Two treats the state rights positions of the Czechs and Germans in the era of administrative experimentation. Part Three discusses specifically the Bohemian Ausgleich and the Hohenwart era. Part Four analyzes the role of the Prague press in the exposition of the Fundamental Articles. And finally, Part Five serves as a conclusion, analyzing the Hohenwart era as a caesura in Czech-German relations.

In Part One, Scharf places the conflict over the Hohenwart Ausgleich into a larger perspective, relating it as one in a series of events (1848/49, 1859/60, and 1867) that served to escalate the conflict between the two Bohemian peoples. He points out that the revolutions of 1848/49 did not originate as a conflict between the nationalities, but that the difficult political questions of the revolutions implicitly raised issues of national culture and linguistic rights. Following the revolutions, "Neoabsolutism enlarged the distance between the Germans and the Czechs" (p. 30). Basing his interpretations on consequences rather than motives, Scharf defines Neoabsolutism as a "German regime" in which the centralizing policies of Alexander Bach benefitted the "state people" most of all, bringing the Germans into closer association with the government and creating an ever-declining agreement in interests between the Czechs and the Germans. Although the German language was certainly privileged as the language of government, educated Czechs were employed in the imperial administration in great numbers, particularly in Hungary, due to their facility in the German language, and contemporary documents of the Bohemian governor illustrate a disdain among the officials responsible for public order and security in Bohemia for nationalism of any kind.

In 1859/60, following defeat in Italy, the Habsburg court initiated a period of administrative experimentation. With the October Diploma of 1859, an enlarged Reichsrat was created and the provincial diets strengthened, marking a victory for the crownland federalists vis-a-vis centralists, who supported the continued administrative unification of the Monarchy. In Bohemia, the Czechs also viewed this reorganization as a "step in the direction of the legitimate development of Austria for the benefit of the small nations" (p. 32). "Similarly, the October Diploma was rejected by the large nations, most of all the German liberal circle but also the Hungarian public, because of its decentralizing character" (p. 32). Although the October Diploma was superseded in 1860 by the February Patent, which returned greater authority to the central government, the pattern of alignment that would characterize the struggle over the Bohemian Ausgleich of 1871 was already evident.

The Ausgleich of 1867 marked the "final stage in the internal reorganization of the empire" and another escalation in national conflict, "reflecting from this point on both the dominance of the Germans and the dominance of the Hungarians as the second *Staatsvolk*" (p. 41). Scharf quotes Franz Heere in a footnote, stating that the division of the empire, in practice, was not so simply a *tete-a-tete* between the Hungarians and Germans, but this is a point that needs to be more forcefully stated if a wrong impression of this Austro-Hungarian Ausgleich as an Austrian-Hungarian national compromise is to be avoided. Scharf also comments that, among the Czechs, Dualism promoted a tendency toward Panslavism, and in its political consequences hindered any further reform efforts, constituting a political dead end.

In Part Two, Scharf elaborates on the Czech and German positions regarding federalism and centralism. He briefly reviews the "reawakening" of Czech national consciousness during the late eighteenth century, stating categorically that many Czechs viewed the "Habsburg German autocracy of neoabsolutism and the German people as identical" (p. 57). In discussing the search for a national identity, Scharf states that there were several options open to the German Bohemians, but that "since to be a separate people would leave them as a minority… it is no wonder that they chose to consider themselves Germans living in Bohemia rather than Bohemian Germans, which would define them as a part of a Bohemian people." In this, Scharf identifies the origins of the German Bohemian orientation toward Vienna and centralism. The German liberals, the *Verfassungspartei*, consequently saw themselves as defenders of the current order. Scharf does not analyze the construction of national identity in any greater depth, but, in the German case, leaves it as a question of tactics in determining political orientation. The notion of German national consciousness is apparently a given.

In Part Three, Scharf carries his presentation of discrete Czech and German interests to the question of the

1871 Bohemian Ausgleich. From the very outset, however, the reform program of the Hohenwart government faced numerous difficulties. According to Scharf, Franz Joseph's goal was to achieve peace and satisfaction in the multinational empire as a prerequisite to pursuing his great power interests in German central Europe. It was evident that there was disaffection among some of the non-German members of the Reichsrat. In this regard, a settlement with the Czechs would be advantageous, but only if it enhanced domestic tranquillity and support for the government. In other words, the court was not committed to a principled position regarding Bohemia. Other factors identified as disadvantageous to the Ausgleich include the "unpopularity" of the Czech alliance with the Bohemian nobility and the desire of the court to avoid antagonizing the recently proclaimed German Empire.

Rather than promoting tranquillity, the appointment of the Hohenwart cabinet provoked an aggressive press campaign. The major Prague-based Bohemian newspapers immediately took uncompromising positions. The Czech national newspapers, *Narodni listy*, *Politik*, and *Pokrok*, strongly supported the new government and its program. The major German newspapers, *Tagesbote aus Boehmen* and *Bohemia*, strongly denounced them. The inflexible position of the press, however, merely reflected that of the political factions they represented. "The Czechs and Bohemian nobility were not prepared to make any compromises," and "the Ausgleich opposition ... wanted no agreement at all" (p. 98). For the government's part, the Ausgleich's Fundamental Articles were considered to be a working draft which was expected to undergo further modifications. Hohenwart expected some opposition from the Germans, but not that it would be so vehement or that it would turn into an Austria-wide movement.

In Part Four, Scharf elaborates on the Ausgleich conflict, identifying it as a decisive turning-point in Czech-German relations, which led to the consolidation of the dualistic system and advanced the division of Bohemia's two peoples into individual societies. In this regard, Scharf finds the contemporary Prague newspapers an especially useful source, because, in the absence of actual debate in either the Reichsrat or the Bohemian diet, they provided the only forum for a discussion of the issues. According to Scharf, not only did "the newspapers have a considerable part in the mobilization of the masses related to the national political conflict" (pp. 120-1), but they also carried news of the Fundamental Articles and the events in Prague outside of the province, "causing an uproar against the Hohenwart ministry in Hungary and in the Austrian districts" (pp. 129-37). This opposition was eventually led by Friedrich Ferdinand Baron von Beust, the foreign minister, and Gyula Count Andrassy, Minister-President for Hungary, who held decisive influence at court. The refusal on all sides to negotiate the compromise solution sought by the emperor meant the complete failure of the Ausgleich and the fall of the Hohenwart ministry.

Scharf's contention that the crisis of 1871 destroyed any further chance of federative reforms in the Monarchy and a hardening of Czech and German political positions diverges little from the general conclusions of previous writers. His further point, that "in the Hohenwart era the political association of the two Bohemian peoples was given a fundamentally new form" and that the "deeply affecting consequences of the political affairs of 1871 can be attributed to the publication work of the Prague daily press" (p. 176) is, at least, disputable, and opens a number of difficulties concerning his use of evidence.

The great majority of Scharf's citations, especially during the first three parts of the book, are from published histories. Among those he frequently cites are Robert Kann, Josef Redlich, Richard Charmatz, Adolph Fischhof, and Walter Rogge. Fischhof and Rogge are, or course, writers from the period under study, but Scharf's reliance upon published histories is problematic, reflecting a greater familiarization with the collected opinions and conclusions of scholars than with primary sources. Rogge and Fischhof published during the 1870s and 1880s, but their works, together with the memoir of Albert Schaeffle, the co-architect of the Bohemian *Ausgleich*, the 1871 edition of seven Prague newspapers, and a handful of quotations from the collected papers of the Bohemian governor's office, do not provide sufficient evidence to justify the author's sweeping conclusion that "the political association of the two Bohemian peoples was given a fundamentally new form." Although general comments are given related to the important political events before and after 1871, again based upon secondary sources, there is nowhere in the book a detailed analysis of "the political association of the two Bohemian peoples" during any period, or even an explanation of what the author means by political association.

Similarly, when discussing the social impact of the press campaign, Scharf claims that the papers contributed to a "polarization of the Bohemian population" (p. 109). Yet he provides no direct evidence of this. He does provide figures reflecting the contemporary growth in membership of the *Casino-Vereine*, *Politische Vereine*,

and *Bildungsvereine*, mentions the *Wanderversammlung des deutschhistorischen Vereins* at the end of September 1871 in Teplitz (Teplice), which supported the opposition efforts of the German liberals, and mentions the numerous addresses and petitions then appearing in the Bohemian newspapers, but otherwise provides no evidence that the newspapers themselves had any direct impact on the public. Scharf correctly questions the actual origin of the addresses and petitions published by the newspapers and relates that the newspapers may still have only been read by a "mostly already politically active part of the population" (p. 109). Despite these reservations, however, he attributes to the newspapers a social influence that he has not proven. Scharf makes no use either of Bohemian newspapers from outside of Prague, which may have given some indication of the spread of the major newspapers' influence, or of the other non-political periodicals, which might have spoken to the depth to which these issues affected the periodical press as a whole. In 1848, for instance, each of the Bohemian periodical took up political issues. Scharf includes the files of the *Presidium mistodrzitelstvi* (*Praesidium der Statthalterei*) for the period 1860-70 and 1871-80 in his bibliography, but perhaps may have made greater use of these and other archival sources. I found a great wealth of information on the government's estimation of popular sentiment in the countryside in these records for the 1850s. This may also be true for the two succeeding decades.

Another difficulty lies in his uncritical use of the terms *Czech* and *German*. While it is probably the case that the newspapers influenced some persons' sense of identity and it was certainly the endeavor of many of the contemporary writers to do so, it remains as yet impossible to speak of a widely held discrete national identity at this juncture. The claims of nationalist publicists and the stated fears of the state authorities that a strong popular reaction could occur does not indicate that "the Bohemian population gathered in 1871 more strongly around the current press organs as centralists, *Verfassungstreue*, or federalists, before all else as Germans or Czechs" (p. 160). In the absence of stronger evidence, more cautious conclusions are in order. Even if the author accepts a notion of primordial national existence, it is, in light of the last twenty years of scholarship, necessary that some statement be made with regard to this question.

An additional area of inquiry that would have proved interesting involves the very ability of the press to express these opinions openly. The legal basis for contemporary press policy was the rather "liberal" press law of December 17, 1862 which removed the requirement of licensing periodicals, the system of administrative warnings, the administrative prohibition of foreign and domestic publications, and placed final authority over press cases in the hands of the judicial rather than political authorities. Furthermore, after 1868, the government lost the right to ban periodicals. Still, the requirement that newspapers pay a monetary deposit against future transgressions survived, it was still illegal to sell the papers door to door, and confiscations were allowed with a court order. Pre-publication censorship also remained.

Press laws do not, however, define the conduct of press policy. The documents of the Bohemian governor's office for the 1860s, for instance, relate that when the 1862 press law was seen to place too great a restriction on censorship activity, the authorities in Bohemia turned rather to criminal law to prosecute publicists under the infamous charge of disturbing the peace. Scharf mentions that the police reports to the governor's office, especially during the last part of Hohenwart's tenure, were more critical of the Czech press than that of the German Bohemians. He further writes that while the Czech papers, which were friendly to the Ausgleich policy, were confiscated during the Hohenwart era, the German papers, "worthy of confiscation," do not "seem" to have been confiscated at all (p. 157).

A further development of this point, to show whether the police or any other arm of the government involved in public order and security actively supported one side or the other, would provide insights into the government's role in the open expression of national sentiment. My own work on press policy shows that during the 1850s the government's more thorough suppression of Czech-language periodicals had more to do with their content, vis-a-vis the German-language periodicals, than with any support for German national sentiment. During the 1850s, the officials were equally opposed to all forms of national expression. Did the officials responsible for public order and security in Bohemia in 1871 have the same opinion as their 1850s predecessors?

Scharf presents a useful narrative of the events surrounding the struggle over the Bohemian Ausgleich, but he does not significantly challenge the general concensus about the motivations of the parties involved. He does not provide adequate evidence to support his thesis that the event or the press significantly altered popular attitudes in Bohemia. Nor does he offer fresh insights into thematic issues such as the role of the press or political controversy in the development of popular nation-

alism or national identity. Although on this last point the newspapers may be assumed to have had some impact, the nature of that impact remains uncertain in the absence of an investigation into their public reception.

Notes

[1]. Rudolf Springer [pseudonym of Karl Renner], *Der Kampf der oesterreichischen Nationen um den Staat*, (Leipzig; Wien: F. Deuticke, 1902), 33.

[2]. Eduard Fuchs, *Die Karikatur der europaeischen Voelker vom Altertum bis zur Neuzeit*, II: *Vom Jahre 1848 bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin: A. Hofmann & Comp., 1903), 308.

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