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Reinhard Mueller. *Marienthal: Das Dorf, die Arbeitslosen, die Studie.* Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2008. 423 pp. EUR 39.90 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-7065-4347-7.

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When Austrians Ate Dogs: Marienthal

Reinhard MÃ¼ller's book revisits one of the most important studies on unemployment: the 1933 work *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal.* This study was a path-breaking empirical investigation by a group of young Austrian sociologists on the psychological effects of prolonged unemployment for the out-of-work community.[1] Its title referenced an Austrian village located twenty-five kilometers south of Vienna, where the closure of the only factory in 1932 put most of the population out of work, leaving it in poverty and destitution. But only after an English translation appeared in 1971 did the study gain worldwide recognition.[2] In their study, the Austrian researchers showed that the destructive effects of idleness and hopelessness that came with prolonged unemployment led to a contraction of the individuals' spheres of existence. They observed a diminution of expectation and activity, a disrupted sense of time, as well as a steady decline into resignation and apathy, which led the researchers to conclude that the long-term unemployed were unlikely to be the protagonists of a socialist revolution. Famous for its straightforwardness, its usage of multiple methods (for example, the study of apple consumption, newspaper circulation, theatrical performances, and housekeeping statistics), and for its humanistic approach (the study included a number of close-up, personal life histories), the investigation was also sensitive to gender differences. The researchers devoted an equal amount of case studies to women and men; they demonstrated that unemployed women, whose days remained filled with childcare and household work, had a considerably less disrupted sense of time. The study only provided a short sketch of the history of Marienthal's factory and workers, and MÃ¼ller's book provides for the first time a detailed description of the village's past and of the context of the homonymous study.

MÃ¼ller set out to collect all available information on the village, the study, and the authors, in order to provide the historical backdrop for the original investigation .By illuminating the past of the factory and its workers, MÃ¼ller shows that Marienthal was, and is, more than just a village of the unemployed. In order to make his argument, MÃ¼ller devides the book into three parts. The

first and most extensive section begins with the history of Gramatneusiedl, the agricultural village adjacent to what later became Marienthal. The second section is dedicated to the original *Marienthal* study itself, and includes biographical sketches of its authors and researchers. The final and shortest section of the book consists of interviews conducted in 1984 with three of the original *Marienthal* researchers.

Gramatneusiedl dates back to ca. 1120, but little is known about its early years. Written documents record a church built in 1399, and the siege of Vienna in 1529 is known to have destroyed large parts of the village. The first mention of a mill appears in 1591 and records show that in 1751 it was sold to a new owner. A school was established in 1762 and the village's first inn opened nine years later. In 1820, a new investor bought the mill and transformed it into a flax-spinning factory, which was sold to the industrialist Hermann Todesco in 1830. His son Max built its first worker residences sometime after 1845, and it was these residences, located close to the mill, which would become the center of Marienthal. Marienthal's population grew quickly: in 1823, it was home to 23 people; in 1846 its population counted 258 people; by 1850 this figure had risen to 517. After the railways arrived from Vienna in 1846, a spinning factory was constructed, and a weaving factory was built in 1855. The plant was sold to the family of Vinzenz Miller (later von Miller zu Aichholz) in the 1880s, and continued to expand. The population of Marienthal more than doubled until the onset of the First World War, rising to 1,689 people by 1910. About 30 percent of the factory's workforce came from surrounding villages, while most other workers came from Bohemia and Moravia.

Marienthal had already experienced periods of high unemployment following the First World War. In 1919, the unemployment rate in the district of Gramatneusiedl stood at 23 percent, but economic recovery during the period of inflation quickly reduced the number of unemployed..Following the stabilization of the Austrian currency, unemployment figures rose and remained above forty percent during 1923 and 1924. The sale of the textile factory to the Mauthner conglomerate in 1925 breathed new life into Marienthal, and unemployment all but disappeared. After the work force was reduced to half its size in July 1926, the purchase of new machines led to the rehiring of fired workers a year later. By 1929, the number of workers at the Marienthal factory had reached its highest level ever: twelve hundred workers and ninety white-collar employees were on its payroll. But the collapse in 1926 of the bank Neue Wiener Bankgesellschaft AG, headed by Stephan Mauthner and which had financed much of his enterprise, heralded the decline of Marienthal. By March 1929, the workload at the factory diminished. In September 1929, the majority of its facilities closed and in February 1930 the factory shut down completely. Twelve hundred workers were now unemployed and almost 75 percent of Marienthal's population was dependent on government support. Their economic situation and that of the village deteriorated rapidly, and many residents lived on the verge of total poverty.

A new factory that opened in 1932 only employed a fraction of the former workers, but eventually a number of circumstances brought about the disappearance of mass unemployment. Some families moved away, while others found new work, or began commuting to Vienna. After the Nazi takeover of Austria in 1938, the Marienthal factory was "aryanized," changed ownership once more in 1940, and finally closed again in 1943. Following the war, production at the factory recommenced, but employed only 90 workers, primarily women. The factory closed its gates again in 1958, but in 1962 a new chemical factory opened on its grounds, which currently employs 220 workers.

MÃ¼ller's historical account is enriched by primary documents, including a description of Gramatneusiedl by Ferdinand Royss dating back to 1754, a social study of the Marienthal factory from 1835, an account of Gramatneusiedl during the 1848 October Revolution, and excerpts from proceedings of the village's community council. MÃ¼ller also presents his readers with biographical sketches of the different factory owners, including the "aryanizer" Fritz Ries and detailed studies of the various communal and political organizations that flourished in Marienthal. Noteworthy is the separate section dedicated to five Marienthal communists executed by the Nazis in 1943. This first part ends with an extensive and commented bibliography on Marienthal and Gramatneusiedl.

The almost overwhelming detail, although interesting, is not obviously relevant. For example, it is unclear why MÃ¼ller mentions that the teacher Moritz Kahrer, founder of Gramatneusiedl's voluntary fire brigade in 1894, committed suicide our of fear that he might have contracted rabies from a dog bite and that a few years earlier another teacher had taken his life, too. Similarly, MÃ¼ller chooses to mention–without further explanation–that by 1970 all streets in Gramatneusiedl had been tarred and lined with regular sidewalks.

The book's second part is dedicated to the *Marien-*

thal study itself. Otto Bauer, leader of the Social Democratic Party, suggested the investigation into the village after a series of reports on Marienthal were printed in the socialist newspaper *Das Kleine Blatt*. Financed by the American Rockefeller Foundation and the Chamber for Workers and Employees of Lower Austria and Vienna, the study was conducted by the Ãsterreichische Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungstelle, a commercial research institute led by Paul Lazarsfeld. The research, conducted from November 1931 onwards, was partially inspired by ongoing discussions among Austrian socialists on whether prolonged unemployment led to apathetic inactivity, or instead instilled a revolutionary spirit among people without work. The research showed that the resignation, inactivity, and idleness experienced by the out-of-work community, resulted in reduced political interests, making the long-term unemployed unlikely revolutionary subjects. Methodologically, the study combined non-reactive techniques, such as the evaluation of statistical data, records, and unnoticed observations, with reactive techniques like visits, questionnaires, and case studies.

Among the interesting primary documents reprinted in this section are instructions to field researchers, several early reviews (including one from 1933 by the American Robert N. McMurry entitled "When Men Eat Dogs"), and a police report from the Gendarmerie at Gramatneusiedl on the recent arrival of the researchers from Vienna, whom the police suspected were spreading communist propaganda. The second part ends with informative biographical sketches of all the project's fifteen researchers, bibliographies of their publications, and a bibliography of the *Marienthal* study itself.

The book's third section consists of three separate interviews conducted in 1984 with Marie Jahoda, Gertrude Wagner, and Lotte Danzinger. Jahoda, who was married to Lazarsfeld, worked at the institute and wrote the text of the *Marienthal* study. Wagner was employed by the institute and participated in the evaluation of the collected data, while Danzinger had done much of the fieldwork. The interviews are revealing: Jahoda remembers that Danzinger had a central role in the study, but that she only participated reluctantly, while Wagner is of the opinion that Danzinger's efforts did not receive sufficient recognition. Danzinger, first unwilling to grant an interview, finally recalls living in Marienthal for a few weeks and having hated it. Then, when invited to participate in the evaluation of the data, she had refused, because, as she recalls, she had been angry–it is unclear why.

One of the most dramatic revelations in the interviews concerns a love triangle that might have affected the study itself. Danzinger and Jahoda had both been members of the Austrian socialist student's union in high school and had studied education together from 1927 to 1929. Danzinger subsequently worked with Lazarsfeld at the Psychological Institute of Vienna University. Meanwhile, Jahoda, who had married Lazarsfeld in 1927, gave birth to their daughter Lotte. But in 1932, at the time of the study, Jahoda and Lazarsfeld already lived apart and later got divorced. Wagner remembers Danzinger causing unspecified trouble at the time of the study and Jahoda claims Danzinger was never asocialist. A relationship of some sort between Lazarsfeld, Jahoda and Danzinger was somehow intertwined with the study, but it remains unclear if it impacted the *Marienthal* findings. In any case, MÃ¼ller does not provide a clear answer.

MÃ¼ller's book is an encyclopedic book of reference, a compendium of facts, dates, and figures on Gramatneusiedel, Marienthal, and the *Marienthal* study. Its primary documents situate it as an invaluable compendium for scholars interested in the investigation for their teaching or research. But as a methodological case study, this book's importance goes beyond Austrian history. Although MÃ¼llers actual thesis is nebulous, one theme is nonetheless clear: historians can never fully comprehend, let alone objectively evaluate, the relevance of the myriad facts and events that shape the course of history. MÃ¼ller's book is a trove of such fascinating facts, details, and insights into the history of Marienthal, its factory and its workers, and into the lives of the people involved in the study that made this little Austrian village famous.

Notes

[1]. Marie Jahoda-Lazarsfeld, Hans Zeisl, *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal: Ein soziographischer Versuch Ã¼ber die Wirkungen langdauernder Arbeitslosigkeit* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1933).

[2]. Marie Jahoda, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Hans Zeisel, *Marienthal: The sociography of an unemployed community* (Chicago and New York: Aldine, Atherton, 1971).

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