

AUSTRIA BETWEEN THE EC AND CENTRAL EUROPE

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1. Austria is a westernized country, not yet a member of the European Community, with cultural, economic, and historical ties to many East-Central and South-Eastern European countries of the former Communist bloc. Thus it faces some interesting possibilities for regional identification and cooperation in the 1990s. On the one hand, this small state gravitates toward the European Community, with which it shares postwar free-market economic development, and the now very large state of Germany, with which it shares a linguistic, a cultural, and a certain political tradition. On the other hand there is Austria's connection with Central Europe, as one of a number of small states that by dint of size, location, and history share important interests. The three watersheds of German unification, the advent of national self-determination in Eastern Europe, and Austria's application for membership in the European Community make these two directions in its relationship with the rest of Europe current and vital for a country that even before these developments had often been forced to confront the question of its identity.

The historical roots of Austria's intermediate position lie in the role that the Habsburg empire, the predecessor of the first and second Austrian republics, adopted in the politics of nationalism and German unification in the nineteenth century. The competition of the Austrian Empire with Prussia for leadership within the German-speaking world and Central Europe placed the Habsburg state in what Robert A. Kann terms an "insoluble dilemma."¹ If it were to pursue its German interests, it would have to follow the policy of Prince Felix Schwarzenberg, prime minister from 1848 to 1852, and abandon its semifeudal conservative tradition to become a more efficient, modern, centralized state that could rival Prussia. But this would endanger the domestic policy of controlling and protecting the diverse nationalities of East-Central Europe and South-Eastern Europe, a difficult task in the face of Russian imperial designs and Panslavic nationalist agitation.² After Schwarzenberg's death in 1852, Austria chose the more conservative approach, and the disintegration of Austrian power began: the defeats by the French and Sardinians in 1859 and by the Prussians in 1866, the Hungarian Compromise of 1867, and the First World War.

In the 1850s, Habsburg Austria was pulled between confederation with the German states, which would entail a loss of dynastic influence, and retention of its dynastic power, which would entail a loss of influence in

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¹ Robert A. Kann, *History of the Habsburg Empire 1526-1918* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 266.

² See Kann, 266-69.

Germany and a loss of favor with the West. In the late 1980s and early 90s, the Austrian Republic has chosen between confederation with the European Community, which entails a certain loss of domestic sovereignty, and continued non-alignment, which would entail forfeiture of the benefits of EC membership, not to mention the necessity of competing with that vast trading bloc. One fundamental question is the same now as it was then: do Austria's interests lie mainly in the West and Germany, or in East-Central Europe and the (former) Habsburg lands?

The choices in the 1990s do not constitute a "dilemma," nor do they exclude each other; in fact Austria is proceeding vigorously with both its accession to the EC and its political and economic cooperation with Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Slovenia, and other Eastern and Central European countries. Yet the respective emphasis apportioned to the two sides of this question by the Austrian leadership and citizenry during the next few years could have profound and lasting consequences for the republic. For this reason I would like in the following to review the question of Austrian regional identity from several perspectives. First, I shall briefly summarize the recent discussion of Austrian national identity, especially as it relates to joining the European Community. Then I shall consider several notions of what "Central Europe" is, and what it could mean for Austria. Within this framework I shall review Austrian actions in the past few years that evince a marked orientation either to the European Community (and hence Germany) or to Central Europe. As a particular case of the possibilities of Central European regional cooperation I shall concentrate on Austrian relations with Slovenia. Rounding this off will be a summary of what I see as Austria's prospects and possibilities.

2. In a recent work on the perennial subject of Austrian identity, the Innsbruck political scientist Anton Pelinka (1990) finds that Austria shares a peculiar situation with Belgium and (what was then) Yugoslavia, to the extent that a solution to their respective national questions could threaten their very existence as states. The Flemings, however, are drawn to the Netherlands, and the Walloons gravitate to France; and Yugoslavia is breaking into new nation-states. But there is no major national split within Austria. As Pelinka puts it: "The question of Austrian identity is thus the question whether Austria does exist as a separate political, cultural, economic entity — or whether it simply does not."³

This puts Austrians in a position where the desire for a nation-state is not, indeed cannot be, the same as nationalism. German nationalism can logically desire only the extinction of Austria as a political entity. And while the right-wing populist Jörg Haider of the Austrian Liberal Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ) has gained some support for his emphasis on the Germanness of Austrians, polls show that Austrian identification with the Second Republic has grown steadily since 1955. In 1989, nearly 80% of Austrians expressed belief in Austria as a nation, up

³ Anton Pelinka, *Zur österreichischen Identität: Zwischen deutscher Vereinigung und Mitteleuropa* (Wien: Ueberreuter, 1990) 10. All translations from German to English are the author's.

from just under 50% in 1956; and the percentage of those disavowing an Austrian nation sank from over 45% to less than 10% in the same period.⁴ Devotion to Austria as the state now exists is of course patriotism, that is, devotion to the political entity, and not nationalism, that is, devotion to the *Volk*. This division between ethnicity and *patria* is the crux of the Austrian identity crisis to the extent that it still exists: Austria is German, yet not German. If its Germanness is carried to its logical consequence, Austria would no longer be Austria. But is there an alternative to Germanness, namely, a cultural Austrianness determined by more than identification with the state? There are several possible answers.

The immediate practical answer, the basis of the Second Republic's existence as a state, is rooted in the notion that Austria was mainly a victim rather than a perpetrator of Nazism, and thus not to be identified with Germany. This attitude, based on the Moscow Declaration of 1943 and the 1955 State Treaty, pervaded the first two decades of Austrian independence, giving Austrians a sort of fortuitous identity as a neutral product of the Second World War, unique in its intactness and independence from the Eastern and Western blocs. But it also allowed them to disregard their ambiguous past, and a *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* — a coming to terms with the past — on the scale of West Germany's never took place. Of late, politicians like Federal Chancellor Franz Vranitzky have corrected this historical distortion somewhat with a more balanced view: some Austrians were victims and some, they admit, were perpetrators.⁵

A number of Austrian intellectuals view neutrality as an Austrian virtue that is threatened by joining the EC. They see a strict interpretation of the State Treaty of 1955 as an important barrier to being pulled back into the sphere of German influence, which would only encourage the illiberal tendencies already present in Austria. Among the more emphatic of these are the writers and critics Michael Scharang, Josef Haslinger, and Peter Turrini. Scharang, for example, writes that the new postwar Austrian consciousness, although preferable to a pan-German identity, is based on a lie and therefore has permitted a not-so-hidden National-Socialist continuity in the Second Republic.⁶ An alternative to this blurring of history for the sake of feeling good, honestly or not, about one's past would have been the exploitation of postwar Austria's strengths. For Scharang, these were strong nationalized industries and a near monopoly in trade with Eastern Europe.⁷ These have been progressively lost, as have the chances for political advantage that Haslinger describes: demilitarization, freedom from bloc-based political polarizing, and a historically aware public critical consciousness.⁸ Turrini

⁴ Pelinka, 17.

⁵ Vranitzky: Viele haben Widerstand geleistet, viele haben den Anschluß begrüßt," *Informationen aus Österreich* 15/91 (23 Jul 1991) 2.

⁶ Michael Scharang, "Diesen Staat kann kein Skandal erschüttern, denn er ist selbst ein Skandal" in *Das Wunder Österreich oder wie es in einem Land immer besser und dabei immer schlechter wird. Essays, Polemiken, Glossen* (Wien, Zürich: Europaverlag, 1989) 37.

⁷ Scharang, "Österreich (ge)denkt, Deutschland lenkt" in *Das Wunder Österreich*, 167.

⁸ Josef Haslinger, *Politik der Gefühle: Ein Essay über Österreich* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1987) 142.

seeks in vain for a homeland — a *Heimat* — where quality of life and justice outweigh economic considerations,⁹ and he compares Austria's relationship with Germany to a prostitute's with her client.¹⁰ Thus these three define Austrianness variously as neutrality, independence from Germany, inherence in both Western and Eastern Europe, and socialism with a human face. Their critiques, whatever virtues they might have, bespeak a curious left-wing conservatism that regards Austria's pre-EC status as protection against losing the "third way" between international capitalism and communism.

The political scientists Margit Scherb and Inge Morawetz argue that the practical erosion of a separate Austrian identity need not await accession to the EC.¹¹ The tying of the schilling to the deutschmark, the trade imbalance with the Federal Republic, and the extensive "internationalization" of Austrian capital and media — largely at the hands of German investors — all speak for the actual dependence of Austria on Germany and the EC, in spite of continued political independence.¹² All of the writers mentioned share the conviction that Austria's political independence cannot be maintained without economic independence; thus they reject both a historical national identification and a future economic identification with Germany through the EC.

Even if one accepts political and economic independence as one basis of Austrian identity, this still leaves unanswered the question whether there actually is a separate Austrian national or cultural identity. The journalist and politician Günther Nenning speaks of a greater German imaginative or spiritual empire — a *Geisterreich* — which flourishes only so long as it is not identical with a political state.¹³ "The nation-state, a miscarriage of the 19th century, is everywhere a sin against the spirit of diversity, against the holy crazy quilt of nations and peoples, landscapes and cities, languages and dialects."¹⁴ A cultural empire tolerates and promotes differences, whereas a nation-state wipes them out. If it is not to present a threat to Austria's uniqueness, Austrian Germanness can exist solely on a cultural level. That uniqueness consists for Nenning precisely in Austria's historical ability to

⁹ Peter Turrini, "Heimat, deine Verrückten" in *Mein Österreich: Reden, Polemiken, Aufsätze* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1988) 91-102.

¹⁰ Turrini, "Die Deutschen und die Österreicher — Chronik einer touristischen Begegnung" in *Mein Österreich*, 137-47.

¹¹ Margit Scherb und Inge Morawetz, eds., *In deutscher Hand? Österreich und sein großer Nachbar* (Wien: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1990) xi.

¹² All of these issues are addressed in contributions to the Scherb-Morawetz book. On the currency question and international trade, see Scherb, "Wir und die westeuropäische Hegemonialmacht," 27-59; on internationalization, see Morawetz, "Schwellenland Österreich? Aktuelle Veränderungen der österreichischen Eigentumsstruktur im Sog der Internationalisierungsstrategien der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," 87-112; on media ownership see Hans Heinz Fabris, "Medienkolonie — na und?" 113-29.

¹³ Günther Nenning, *Grenzenlos deutsch: Österreichs Heimkehr ins falsche Reich* (München: Kneesebeck & Schuler, 1988) 12-20. Nenning maintains that the opposite of the mind or spirit (*Geist*) is the state, and that the German spiritual or mental empire (including Austria) has flourished, while German states have been catastrophes (14-15). The true empire of the Germans has always consisted of nothing but secondary German states and never of a primary one." (15)

¹⁴ Nenning, 21.

be culturally German and supranational while remaining politically non-German. He does not ignore German hegemony under Habsburg, the Anschluss period, or present-day xenophobia in Austria, but he recognizes a countercurrent tradition as well that he defines as Austrian:

It is impossible to imagine what would have happened if my imperial-royal ancestors had had enough intelligence to manage the impossible reconstruction of the old Empire into a halfway democratic federal state. Because Austrians find East and West equally weird, between them there would lie a solid Central Europe with four or five capitals: Vienna, Prague, Ljubljana, Zagreb — these three are *west* of Vienna! — , Budapest, and maybe a couple others; a real federation of states should be motley, preferably with a motley crew of capitals.¹⁵

A more optimistic voice, the late journalist and politician Jörg Mauthe, also emphasizes the cultural identity of Austria. He worries not so much about the dominance of Germany over Austria as about the Austrian as his own worst enemy, who makes “typically Austrian” into a pejorative phrase denoting sloppiness or failure.¹⁶ Mauthe counters the prevailing pessimism with examples of Austria’s successes in literature, science, and the visual and performing arts, distinctions out of proportion to Austria’s smallness.

Anton Pelinka summarizes the threats to a separate Austrian identity — the insufficient critical distance from the past, the selling of Austria to outside interests, and the Austrian’s own conflicted sense of identity — but sees them also as quintessentially Austrian, as a national burden that needs to be offset by setting a new course, which he refers to as the “fifth Austria.” The first through fourth Austrias were the monarchy, the First Republic, the Austro-Fascist Corporate State, and the Second Republic insofar as it has been marked by excessive identification with subnational loyalties, namely socialist and Christian democratic political camps.¹⁷ Pelinka’s book continues the critical tone of Scharang, Scherb and Morawetz, and others, but he is most critical not of German leanings, but of Austrian business-as-usual: the politics of the *élite*.

The book also contains cautious optimism: Pelinka wrote it after the radical changes of 1989 and 1990, and the opening of Eastern Europe seems to present alternatives both to a party-book bureaucracy and to ingestion by the Western European economic leviathan. Unlike Nanning, however, Pelinka sees no definitive possibility in Austria’s identifying itself with Central Europe: “Austria has set itself off — from Central Europe. Austria is defending its privileges.”¹⁸ History has made Austria part of western Europe. As a balance to German domination, Pelinka likes the Swiss

¹⁵ Nanning, 194.

¹⁶ Jörg Mauthe, *Der Weltuntergang zu Wien und wie man ihn überlebt. Austriakische Einsichten in zukünftige Aussichten* (Wien: Edition Atelier, 1989) 143.

¹⁷ Pelinka, 13-19.

¹⁸ Pelinka, 137.

model, which shows that “small is beautiful,” more than the Central European model.¹⁹

3. But what is Central Europe? Like Austrian identity, the notion of Central Europe has been subject to historical change and to various interpretations. These fall mainly into two categories, political and cultural, with the political interpretations coming mainly from Eastern Europe and the cultural versions dominating in the West.

“Central Europe” in the understanding of György Konrád is a conceptual alternative to “Eastern Europe,” which was defined by the bisecting of Europe by the superpowers. In the eighties the Central European idea offered Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland the possibility of self-definition. “The one pole is political power with only one center. The other pole is intellectual power with many centers.”²⁰ This describes Konrád’s notion of “antipolitics:” the very idea of politics, the mere interest in power, militates against “middle European modernism,” which for Konrád means a measured and deliberate maintenance of national and regional historical strands that the communist manipulation of history tried to sever.²¹ Konrád’s interest while Hungary was still totalitarian was to discover “What can one still do when one can do practically nothing?”²² “Central Europe” meant for him “Eastern Europe” as an abstract possibility.

As Timothy Garton Ash wrote in 1986, “antipolitics” of one sort or another also lay at the root of the Central European conceptions of Vaclav Havel, Adam Michnik, and Milan Kundera. In spite of the often great differences among these writers, they share a tendency toward a sort of mythopoesis, “the inclination to attribute to the Central European past what you hope will characterize the Central European future....”²³ Thus, under communism, the pursuit of the Central European was a pursuit within the imagination; Garton Ash writes: “This is where Central Europe confronts Eastern Europe: in the autonomous sphere of culture, in the kingdom of the spirit.”²⁴ The phrase is reminiscent of Nennig’s *Geisterreich* of Germany, and reflects the same trust in the mind in the face of political obstacles. Given the difficulties of the German and Austrian past, one might say that Nennig pursues *historical* antipolitics.

For Czesław Miłosz, the historical creation of this Central Europe includes German influence as well. At a Budapest Roundtable discussion in June 1989, whose record appears in the 1991 *Cross Currents* yearbook, he said: “I would risk a very simple definition of Central Europe: all the countries that in August 1939 were the real or hypothetical object of a trade

¹⁹ Pelinka, 146-51. Pelinka’s assertion that Austria is part of the west is clearly supported by official Austrian policy; see, for example, “Vranitzky: klare Orientierung Österreichs zum europäischen Westen,” *Informationen aus Österreich* 1/90 (1 Jan 1990) 3.

²⁰ György Konrád, “Die Schlängelstrategie der osteuropäischen Befreiung” in *Antipolitik: Mitteleuropäische Meditationen*, tr. Hans-Henning Paetzke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp) 116.

²¹ Konrád, “Die paradoxe Mitte” in *Antipolitik*, 113.

²² Konrád, “Die Schlängelstrategie” 119.

²³ Timothy Garton Ash, “Does Central Europe Exist?” in *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe* (New York: Random House, 1989), 184.

²⁴ Garton Ash, 193.

between the Soviet Union and Germany. This means not only the area usually associated with the idea of centrality, but also the Baltic states..."²⁵

Thus both Konrád and Milosz stress recent history in their definitions. Others bolster the claim for a distinct Central European identity by going farther back into history. Milan Kundera, for example, traces "Central Europe" to the baroque, which imposed "a certain cultural unity on the region, which is multinational and thus polycentric..."²⁶ This variety made possible in the twentieth century the cultural revolts of psychoanalysis and the great interwar novelists. After 1945, "Austria's cultural marginality and the political nonexistence of the other countries make Central Europe a premonitory mirror showing the possible fate of all of Europe."²⁷ This warning of 1986 sounds quite different today, of course, but precisely what then seemed crushed by ideology now offers an enticing possibility: unity through variety.

This is the motto employed by the late Magyar-Austrian György Sebestyen, who finds Central Europe distinctive in its role as a border region with a multitude of ethnic layers, a "gigantic graveyard of peoples."²⁸ These have been mainly small peoples, often threatened by greater powers, often occupied, and thereby culturally fertilized. This circumstance has led to peculiarly Central European versions of the great European cultural developments: a Renaissance without direct ancient examples and with urban centers distinct from the Western tradition of early urbanization; a Reformation strengthened by Ottoman support against the Counterreformation and by latent antiroman, antiwestern traditions alongside ancient religions; and an Enlightenment that was to become the driving force of nationalism, which in turn was a chief feature of Central European Romanticism.²⁹ Sebestyen expressly includes Austria in a Central Europe thus defined.³⁰

Also looking for the historical roots of the Mitteleuropa discussion, the Hungarian historian Péter Hának maintains that Mitteleuropa has existed since the Middle Ages as a mediating subregion between West and East, as these were defined chiefly by the 11th-century schism.³¹ The term itself gained currency in the 19th century. Hának identifies several traits of the region that stem from its transitional character, including religious pluralism, the relative freedom and assimilation of the Jews, relatively autonomous and organic capitalist development, and a middle class that

²⁵ H.C. Artmann, Péter Esterházy, Danilo Kis, György Konrád, Edward Limonov, Claudio Magris, Miklos Mészöly, Adam Michnik, Czeslaw Milosz, and Paul-Eerik Rummo, "The Budapest Roundtable," *Cross Currents* 10 (1991) 18.

²⁶ Milan Kundera, "Central Europe" from "Sixty-three Words" in *The Art of the Novel*, tr. Linda Asher (New York: Grove Press, 1988) 124; also see his now-famous essay "The Central European Tragedy" in *The New York Review of Books* (April 26, 1984).

²⁷ Kundera, 125.

²⁸ György Sebestyen, "Die Kultur des Donauraumes — Einheit durch Vielfalt" in *Notizen eines Mitteleuropäers* (Wien: Edition Atelier, 1990) 56.

²⁹ Sebestyen, 62-68.

³⁰ Sebestyen, "Österreich — kleines Welttheater im Donauraum," in *Notizen eines Mitteleuropäers*, 78-88.

³¹ Peter Hanák, "Mitteleuropa — eine imaginäre Realität" in Heino Berg and Peter Burmeister, eds., *Mitteleuropa und die deutsche Frage* (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1990) 49.

established less liberalism than in Western Europe, but more than in Eastern Europe. Like Sebestyen, Hának finds unique cultural movements, such as the Biedermeier.³² He differentiates this Mitteleuropa from West German notions and predicts for it an essential integrative function in Europe.³³

Western thinkers on Mitteleuropa tend not so much to stress political and historical factors as to dwell on the shared culture of the region, which is less sharply defined and thus admits of greater inclusiveness. John Willett sees a Central European configuration in Berlin, Prague, and Vienna, thus shifting the center of the Center rather north and west of the more commonly cited Prague-Vienna-Budapest triangle.³⁴ This germanocentric view is based on Willett's claim that "the search for a Central European culture [...] begins with [the] ancient traces of Germanic colonization" in Eastern Europe.³⁵ Willett also identifies Central European culture in the twentieth century with modernism. On the other hand, another Germanist, Claudio Magris, speaks of "German-Magyar-Slavic-Romanic-Jewish Central Europe, polemically opposed to the Germanic *Reich*" and quotes Johannes Urzidil's pun "hinternational" to describe "a tolerant association of peoples" under the Habsburgs.³⁶ He further examines the "disputed link between Central Europe and Germanism" and finds that there are benign and malignant versions of a Central Europe infused by German culture, from Heinrich von Srbik's Habsburg universalism to Hitler's cruel domination.³⁷ At any rate, Magris says: "Today, questioning oneself about Europe means asking oneself how one relates to Germany."³⁸

4. This brings us back to our main question: how does Austria relate to Europe, and hence to Germany? Identifying with Central Europe would require of Austria patience and humility. It would require acknowledging that Austria's good fortune in 1955 was precisely that, and that the advantages of thirty-five years of unfettered Western-style development do not outweigh the shared culture as defined by Sebestyen, Hának, Kundera, and Magris. This development is a sticking point both for the Austrians and for the Eastern Europeans, who often think of Austria as part of Central Europe only in historical terms, relegating the present republic to the West. That Austria was not in the Soviet sphere seems to be a barrier to its being Central European, especially since many, including Konrád and Milosz, have defined Central Europe as non-Soviet Eastern Europe.

On the German side of the question one must ask whether Austria's casting its lot with the EC is simply economic expedience; or is it a way to regain the Austrian dream, destroyed between 1866 and 1918, of being a European force to be reckoned with? Is it a means to survival as a small state or is it a means to avoid being a small state? Proponents argue that

³² Hának, 50-54.

³³ Hának, 57.

³⁴ John Willett, "Is there a Central European Culture?" *Cross Currents* 10 (1991) 1-15.

³⁵ Willett, 2.

³⁶ Claudio Magris, *Danube*, tr. Patrick Creagh (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1989) 29-30.

³⁷ Magris, 31.

³⁸ Magris, 32.

Austria's separate identity is secure, and that the country should not be shut off from the promising European economic development. Opponents say that the EC will compromise Austria's sovereignty; the more radical among them say the EC is just a way for Germany to reconquer Austria without all the military and political bother.

Whatever one's opinion might be, the fact is that Austria *will* join the EC. It formally applied in the summer of 1989 and in July 1991 the EC Commission recommended Austria's accession. A poll taken in July and August 1991 showed that 55% of Austrians were in favor of joining, and that only 5% saw EC membership as a threat to Austrian neutrality.³⁹ There are indications, however, that Austria is joining the EC not as an equal partner, but as an economic dependent of Germany. Austria's import-export ratio with Germany was about 4:3 in 1991.⁴⁰ More than 1/3 of foreign direct investments in Austria come from Germany, the largest single source.⁴¹ West Germans have a significant interest in about 70% of Austrian daily newspapers — up from zero in 1987.⁴² It is clear that in a practical sense the German orientation of Austria is prevailing. This is true of its EC orientation as well, which has accounted for an increasing proportion of Austrian imports and exports since 1970, while the proportion traded with Eastern Europe and EFTA countries has declined in those years.⁴³

There is, however, also a Central European orientation, as a few facts will show. Austrian exports to Eastern Europe have risen steadily, as have imports from Eastern Europe. As of 1991, Austria was Hungary's second most important trade partner next to Germany, and it held first place in trade with Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria.⁴⁴ As for joint ventures, only Germany has more with Eastern Europe in general. Austria was involved in 1991 in about 15% of all joint ventures, of which about 50% were with Hungary, 20% with Yugoslavia, and 17% with Czechoslovakia.⁴⁵ There is hope for a mid-European industrial zone, which the Rhine-Main-Danube canal, which opened in September 1992, could make a reality.⁴⁶ Many foreign countries see Austria as a "bridgehead" for Eastern European investment.

Austria, being stronger, will have to observe carefully the line between cooperation and exploitation, however. It is possible to infer a patronizing attitude in statements such as Chancellor Vranitzky's that "there is at present no more important political task than to effect the connection of [Eastern Europe] to Western Europe," while pointing out Austria's "special

³⁹ "Mehrheit der Österreicher für EG-Beitritt," *Informationen aus Österreich* 17/91 (3 Sep 1991) 3.

⁴⁰ *Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1991*, 97; this did show some improvement over the year before, however.

⁴¹ Scherb, "Wir und die westeuropäische Hegemonialmacht," 37-38.

⁴² Fabris, 116.

⁴³ *Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1991*, 98.

⁴⁴ *Informationen aus Österreich*.

⁴⁵ "Österreich zweitgrößter Kooperationspartner Osteuropas," *Informationen aus Österreich* 4/91 (19 Feb 1991) 4.

⁴⁶ See "The Danube Commission" in *Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1991* (Vienna: The Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1991), 55-56.

function" in this effort.⁴⁷ Nor does the fact that Austria holds more Eastern European debt than any other country bespeak a relationship among equals.

Austria's participation as one among many Central European countries seems clearer when we turn our attention to cultural exchanges. Minister for Scientific Research Erhard Busek has been particularly energetic in establishing, for example, a treaty on cultural exchange with Hungary and an Austrian-Croatian friendship society.⁴⁸ The Austrian People's Party held its May festival in 1991 in a town near the triple border of Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, and Vice Chancellor Josef Riegler extolled the cooperation of the three neighbors.⁴⁹ There are Austrian schools in Prague and Budapest; there is a new Austrian library in Bratislava, and there have been joint Central European art exhibitions and concerts. Speaking in June in Sopron, Chancellor Vranitzky encouraged increased cooperation within the "Pentagonale" of Austria, Italy, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia⁵⁰ (now the "Central European Initiative," including Poland, Slovenia, and Croatia).⁵¹ This economic, ecological, cultural, and political cooperative was begun in 1989, alongside the well-established Alpe-Adria cooperative, which was founded in 1978. In addition to the north-south Alpe-Adria group, a Danube Commission has operated since 1948, and since 1989 there has been a Cooperative of Danube Lands.⁵²

Economic and cultural relations based on regional rather than national considerations have long been a feature of Central and South-East Europe;⁵³ the Communist period may have discouraged them and made them more difficult, but it did not eliminate them. As an example of this productive regionalism let us look at Austrian cooperation with Slovenia. In concert with cultural treaties between Austria and Yugoslavia in 1974, 1977, 1980, and 1987, cooperation especially between the southern Austrian provinces of Carinthia and Styria and Slovenia has been quite active. In fact, Carinthia was the first province after the war to take up somewhat regular cultural exchanges with Yugoslavia, above all Slovenia.⁵⁴ By the nineteen-seventies there were regular exchanges in the areas of opera, music performance, radio

⁴⁷ "Vranitzky: Osten an Westeuropa anbinden," *Informationen aus Österreich* 17/91 (3 Sep 1991) 3.

⁴⁸ "Kulturabkommen zwischen Ungarn und Österreich" *Informationen aus Österreich* 5/90 (6 Mar 1990) 7; "Kroatisch-Österreichische Gesellschaft gegründet," *Informationen aus Österreich* 6/91 (19 Mar 1991) 6. Busek gave a speech on the topic of Central Europe at the opening ceremonies.

⁴⁹ "ÖVP-Maifeier im "Dreiländereck," *Informationen aus Österreich* 10/91 (14 May 1991) 2.

⁵⁰ "Vranitzky für breitere Zusammenarbeit von Österreich und Ungarn," *Informationen aus Österreich* 13/90 (26 Jun 1990) 2.

⁵¹ "The Central European Initiative" in *Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1991*, 53-55.

⁵² On Austria's participation in the Central European Initiative and the Cooperative of Danube Lands, see *Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1991*, 53-56; on Alpe-Adria and the Confederation of Danube Lands, see *Austrian Foreign Policy Yearbook 1990*, 7-14; on Alpe-Adria, see the five contributions in *Slovene Studies* 10 (1988) 1:3-38.

⁵³ See for example Peter Vodopivec, "Commentary: the Historical Background of Alpe-Adria Cooperation" (*Slovene Studies* 10, 1988, 15-19), which traces such cooperation back to the 1820s (15).

⁵⁴ Werner Weilguni, *Österreichisch-Jugoslawische Kulturbeziehungen 1945-1989* (Wien: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik; München: R. Oldenbourg, 1990), 70.

broadcasts, literary readings, and artistic symposia.⁵⁵ In 1946, Styria also started exchanges with Slovenia (and later Croatia as well). The University for Pedagogical Sciences in Klagenfurt, as well as the University of Graz, the Technical University in Graz, and the Mining College in Leoben, all have various sorts of exchanges with Ljubljana or Maribor.⁵⁶ Many of the initiatives for cultural cooperation have originated with the Slovene minority in Carinthia.⁵⁷ This points up one of the important functions of regional cooperation, especially as pursued by the Alpe-Adria Working Community, namely, the promotion of ethnic understanding and minority rights.⁵⁸ The goal is what supposedly existed under Habsburg: tolerance, polycentrism, multinationalism.

This goal is neither simple nor easy; the complexity of Austrian relations with other Central European countries was demonstrated by the civil war in Slovenia and Croatia. Officially, the government waited until the Yugoslav federal army went too far before recognizing the new republics. Informally, however, the old Austrian anti-Serbian sentiment and perhaps a certain Habsburg sentimentality pushed Austrian reactions beyond neutrality. Weapons exports to Slovenia were prohibited, but only after 2 weeks of fighting; and the governors of Carinthia, Styria, Upper Austria, and Vienna took part in the celebration of Slovene independence.

While this shows a certain Central European solidarity, one hopes that the reasons behind it are forward-looking rather than mainly historical. Many Austrians seem more ready to champion the Slovene cause when the Slovenes are in Slovenia, and not citizens of Carinthia, where there has always been resistance to expressions of national pride and cultural autonomy on the part of the Slovene minority. Thomas M. Barker's book *The Slovene Minority of Carinthia*⁵⁹ reports occasional physical assaults on the students and faculty of the Slovene high school in Klagenfurt (249); German nationalist propaganda against supposed government favoritism toward Slovenes (250); increasing tension and confrontations between German nationalists and Carinthian Slovenes (253); social pressures restricting the use of the Slovene language to only the private sphere (263); and anti-Slovene incidents connected with the censuses of 1961, 1971, and 1976 (a special census to determine the population base for implementing minority rights) (290-91). As evidence of a lack of commitment to Slovene minority rights on the part of the federal government, Barker cites the 1972 "Town Markers" affair, in which attempts to fulfill the minority-protection provisions of the Austrian State Treaty, by putting up signs in Slovene, were bureaucratically limited and half-hearted, and official reaction against the destruction of Slovene-language signs was negligible.⁶⁰ For now, the political weight of German nationalists in Austria seems greater than the

⁵⁵ Weilguni, 70.

⁵⁶ Weilguni, 52-55.

⁵⁷ Weilguni, 78-80.

⁵⁸ See Silvo Devetak, "The Alpe-Adria as a Multinational Region," *Slovene Studies* 10 (1988), 27-35.

⁵⁹ East European Monographs 169 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

⁶⁰ Barker, 281-83.

concern for the Slovene minority. Perhaps continued regional cooperation and understanding can make a small contribution to changing this.

5. As it now appears, Austria is pursuing an increasing economic and hence political identification with Germany, via the EC. The cultural identification with Germany, a historical given, shows no serious tendency at the moment to become distorted in the direction of ethnic pan-Germanism, but this is of course always a danger, especially given the increase in occasions for xenophobia, that most pernicious form of nationalism.

As for Austria's Central-European orientation, the reality seems to be the regional work being done in the Danube group, the Alpe-Adria group, and in bilateral exchanges and cooperation. The concept of a tolerant, polycentric Mitteleuropa as propounded by Sebestyen, Nanning, Hának, and Magris has suffered a great break in continuity, and if anything can establish a new Central European regionalism, it will be present efforts in response to immediate practical needs. This does not mean that past connections will be irrelevant; only that they must be reactivated and re-evaluated. Austria could establish itself within a Habsburg empire without the empire, that is, within a multicultural region without Vienna as its German political center. Such an identification would build upon the past; indeed, it would restore desirable aspects of the past obscured by Soviet domination and the Cold War, while accepting Austria for what it is in the present and the future: a small state among other small states. Although Austria's smallness is the result of external forces, as Pelinka points out, it could be turned to Austria's advantage. "Smallness promotes identity. ... Smallness promotes political quality."⁶¹ That this is true even within the EC has been demonstrated by Denmark, a small nation that, at this writing, is holding up the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, probably out of concern about the loss of national identity and sovereignty.

The critics mentioned earlier, Scharang, Turrini, Morawetz, and Scherb, do not go very far in suggesting what one would be defending by keeping Austria out of the EC, and Germany out of Austrian affairs. A Central European identification under the motto "small is beautiful" could very well supply Austria with a modern *raison d'être* that goes beyond the old notions of antifascism and neutrality. Many Austrians, more so than most Germans outside the south, identify strongly with their subnational regions; for example, many Carinthians feel Carinthian first, German second, and Austrian third, just as Vorarlbergers, Scots, Maritime Canadians, and Catalonians identify more strongly with their regions and ethnic groups than with the political entities they belong to. This indicates that the model of regional cooperation is already at work within Austria, and perhaps only needs to be transferred to international, or intraregional, cooperation.

The European Single Market with Germany as its largest component exerts a strong pull. It may be that Austria will need its role in Central Europe to offset its marginal position in a united Europe. And it may be

⁶¹ Pelinka, 147-48.

that new states like Slovenia can use their solidarity with Austria and other states in the region to a similar purpose. It could turn out that Austria is Austrian only to the extent that it *is* Central European, and that a solid, culturally-based regional identity is needed to counterbalance an abstract, economically-based European identity.

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POVZETEK

AVSTRIJA MED EVROPSKO SKUPNOSTJO IN SREDNJO EVROPO

Dasi še ne članica Evropske gospodarske skupnosti, je Avstrija po svojih tesnih kulturnih, gospodarskih in zgodovinskih vezeh z mnogimi vzhodno-srednjeevropskimi in jugovzhodnimi evropskimi deželami — vsekakor del Zahodne Evrope. Kot taka je v desetletju, v katerem smo, postavljena pred vrsto zanimivih možnosti področne identifikacije in regionalnega sodelovanja. Članek je posvečen razmišljanju o teh gravitacijskih silnicah Avstrije danes. Po kratki ocenitvi najnovejših razpravljanj o avstrijski identiteti, ki jih je pobudila prošnja Avstrije za vstop v Evropsko skupnost, se avtor ustavlja ob več konceptih "Srednje Evrope." V tem okviru teče razprava o avstrijskih potezah zadnjih nekaj let, različnih in deljenih med Evropsko skupnostjo in Srednjo Evropo. Avstrijski odnošaji s Slovenijo nudijo avtorju lep primer možnosti za regionalno sodelovanje.