ABSTRACTS

FROM „ISLANDS OF DEMOCRACY“ TO „TRANSNATIONAL BORDER SPACES“

State of the Art and Perspectives of the Historiography on the First Czechoslovak Republic since 1989

Ines Koeltzsch/Ota Konrád

The article provides an overview over the developments of the historiography on the First Czechoslovak Republic since the end of the Cold War. In the first part the authors focus on the Czech historiography in the 1990s, when the First Czechoslovak Republic experienced a revival in the public as well as in the historiography and was often idealized as an “island of democracy”. Though not exclusively, these writings were dominated by the paradigm of national history. This has changed since at least the first decade of the 21st century. Recent writings on the First Czechoslovak Republic, which are discussed in the second part, analyze Czechoslovakia between the World Wars as a dynamic social, political, economic and cultural space with permeable and shifting borders in- and outside. Furthermore they place Czechoslovakia in its broader regional, European and global contexts. Finally, the authors suggest the term “transnational border spaces” as formulated by Johannes Paulmann and Martin H. Geyer to outline these major changes and to open up further perspectives on the research of the First Czechoslovak Republic within a European and global history.

BEYOND NATIONALITY? COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE IN THE BOHEMIAN LANDS, 1914-1918

Ota Konrád

This contribution deals with spontaneous outbreaks of violence which happened with increasing frequency in the Bohemian lands during the two final years of World War I. The author interprets this type of violence as a special form of communication meant by those people who suffered from the breaking down of supplies of any kind, even in regions far from military operations, to express their increasing remoteness from the order in effect at the time. These were not hysterical outbreaks of anger and frustration, but surprisingly structured statements expressing a general change of mood during the final war years. Basing his arguments on comprehensive
archive work, the author focuses on the composition of the respective protestor collectives, on their notions of just and unjust, and on forms and scale of the violent acts committed. He argues that the protests reflected an increasing degree of the state losing legitimacy in the opinion of the protestors, while those protestors lacked any distinct idea of a possible new order. They wanted their problems solved, on the spot and at once. Taking this into account, it is no surprise, according to the author, that the protestors’ ethnic affiliation had only minor, if any, effects on this home front violence. In this situation of all-around shortages the importance of macro communities – nation, empire – was greatly surpassed by an almost corporal sense of local belonging.

**THE CREATION OF THE CONDITIONS FOR CONSOCIATIONAL DEMOCRACY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN INTERWAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA**

*Philip J. Howe/Thomas A. Lorman/Daniel E. Miller*

The authors present a historical application of the consociational theory of democracy to Imperial Austria (1867-1914) as well as the Czechoslovak First Republic (1918-1938) and interwar Slovakia. The consociational model guarantees minorities a say in government while protecting their interests, thereby helping to preserve democracy in societies with deep ethnic, religious, or other divisions. The authors contend that the nine favorable conditions and the four characteristics of consociational democracy apply, in varying degrees, to the Austrian half of the Habsburg Monarchy and interwar Czechoslovakia. They demonstrate the extent to which Imperial Austria, although never fully democratic, was developing in the direction of consociationalism because it employed, to some degree, proportionality, segmental autonomy, minority veto, and grand coalitions. Interwar Czechoslovakia was not a failed democracy because, in the creation of governments, the evolution of its political institutions, and the implementation of policies, it exhibited all four characteristics of consociationalism. The examination of Slovakia concentrates on how government institutions, particularly the Provincial Office, fostered cooperation among Slovaks and between Slovaks and the central authorities in Prague, thereby undermining the notion of centralism and Czech domination. The authors’ explanation of the development of democracy in Central Europe has implications for interpreting current politics in the region and generally for the historical development of consociational democracy.