

*Rauscher, Walter: Zwischen Berlin und St. Petersburg. Die österreichisch-ungarische Außenpolitik unter Gustav Graf Kálnoky, 1881–1895.*

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The Austro-Hungarian Empire was well served by its foreign ministers. Men like Andrassy, Haymerle, and Goluchowski were the foreign policy stars of the monarchy and of the Emperor. One of these was Gustav Count Kálnoky who was foreign minister for nearly fourteen years from 1881 to 1895, that is for longer than any other holder of that office. For most of this time, that is from 1879 to 1893, the head of the Austrian government was Eduard Count Taaffe. Dr. Walter Rauscher's study of Kálnoky is valuable and important and fills a gap in our knowledge.

Rauscher goes far to explain the political activity of a man, of whom little was known at the time of his appointment. He begins his first chapter with a quotation from the *Neuer Freie Presse* of 23 November 1881: „Das aber ist das Charakteristische, das spezifisch Österreichische an seiner [Kálnokys] Ernennung, daß man nichts von ihm weiß [...] Er tritt in das Ministerium wie eine Jungfrau in die Ehe; man möchte ihn eine politische Unschuld nennen [...]“ (p. 11).

This is nice, although one would hardly accuse a man of political virginity who had been ambassador to St. Petersburg and a major general! The problem, of course is, that little is known about the private life and character of Kálnoky, and Rauscher does little to dispel our ignorance of a man to whom he refers to as a „besonders privat – verschlossenen Mann, der vor allen durch seine Arbeit lebte“, (p. 9). Rauscher blames the destruction of Kálnoky's personal papers for this omission. However, a man's character is betrayed by his actions. Thus, the reorganisation of the Foreign Ministry which is critically described by Helmut Rumpler in his chapter in volume 6/1 of *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, (pp. 76–80) shows at the very least the authoritarian aspects of his character, a fact also noted by Rauscher. And so, indeed, does Rauscher's description of Kálnoky's relations with the ambassadors and ministers accredited to Vienna (pp. 27–28).

The key to Kálnoky's policy was his realisation that Austria-Hungary, whose military potential was second to that of Germany and Russia, required for its well-being close relations with these powers. It also required close contact with Italy and Britain, both important Mediterranean powers, although there was a world of difference between the Austro-Hungarian contacts with Rome to those with London. Finally it also implied an offensive policy towards the Balkan states. Although Austria-Hungary may have been a „Großmacht zweiten Ranges“, (p. 29) it did not appear as such to the rulers of Serbia, Romania or Bulgaria. In any case, Kálnoky's policy was successful, even if it was based on the unattractive doctrine that the peoples of the Balkans licked the

hand which beat them. There was, indeed, a shocking sharpness about Kálnoky's comments, which may indicate both weakness and insecurity of his personality as of the Habsburg state.

The difficulty was that the Bismarckian system, after the creation of the German Reich required stability in international relations. The Habsburg state required such stability too, but it was difficult to achieve it in south-eastern Europe because of the conflict with Russia to fill the political vacuum created by the decline of Ottoman power. This Balkan system was further destabilised by the relationship of the Romanians and Serbs towards their co-nationals within the Monarchy. The unification of Bulgaria with Eastern Rumelia, the defeat of the Serbs at the battle of Slivnica, the dependence of Milan of Serbia on the Habsburg state, the succession to the Bulgarian throne of Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Koháry, were all the inevitable consequences of Balkan politics in the period of decline of Ottoman power.

Troubles were not confined to the Balkans. While the Monarchy needed the Mediterranean power of Italy and of Britain on its side, it had no wish to be involved in such conflicts as the French-Italian quarrel over Tunisia.

Kálnoky's single-minded determination to maintain the safety of the Habsburg Monarchy together with his belief in the dangers posed to all the great powers by what he regarded as the evils of Pan-Slavism, republicanism and international socialism were for a time successful. His often panicky reaction to these 'evils', illustrates his perception of the underlying weakness of the Habsburg state combined perhaps with the realisation that these were forces which could not be exorcised by diplomatic dealings. Moreover, the changes brought about by Bismarck's dismissal and the creation of the Franco-Russian alliance weakened the position of the Monarchy, especially as the Triple Alliance of Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary was of insufficient protection. Rauscher is correct in arguing that the visit of five Russian war ships to Toulon in October 1893 was seen by Kálnoky (and also by the German government) as a direct threat to the Austro-Hungarian position (pp. 192-193).

Kálnoky's policies were now attacked by the Young Czechs and in particular by the journalist and deputy Gustav Eim in 1892; but defended by the Polish deputies. Such attacks were repeated in 1893 by various Czech deputies, among them T. G. Masaryk. Indeed, they were to continue in the next years too. The Czech deputies may have weakened Kálnoky's position, but it was the Hungarian opposition that brought him down. Although Kálnoky's family ancestry was Hungarian, he was himself a member of the German nobility of Moravia. The fairly trivial visit of the papal nuncio to Hungary and his condemnation of the new Hungarian marriage law, involved Kálnoky in a conflict with the Hungarian premier Bánffy. The emperor accepted his resignation in May 1895. Kálnoky died three years later at the early age of 66. The man who lived to work could not survive the idleness that retirement brought.

Dr. Rauscher's book is well documented. Although it does little to humanise the illusive Kálnoky it brings new insights into the policy of the Monarchy and into the international relations of Europe of a hundred years ago. It indicates and illustrates very clearly the limits of power possessed by the Habsburg Monarchy.