

Eduard Winkler *Wahlrechtsformen und Wahlen in Triest 1905-1909: Eine Analyse der politischen Partizipation in einer multinationalen Stadtregion der Habsburgermonarchie* Südosteuropäische Arbeiten 105. Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2000. 405 pp., DM 98 [= \$43.22] (cloth). ISBN: 3486564862.

Since the end of the Cold War, ambitious young scholars have produced a steady stream of valuable historical studies on multilingual regions in Central Europe and the Balkans. Eduard Winkler's fine tome on election reform and elections in late Habsburg Trieste exemplifies this genre, as it takes as its topic a region where three great cultures—Slavic, Latin, and Germanic—converge. The book offers much to historians of Italy, Slovenia, and the Habsburg Empire, as well as to historians of other multinational regions looking for comparative case studies. The author casts a probing and balanced lens of scrutiny at Trieste, giving even the smallest ethnic communities in the region a voice. Winkler thus eclipses and improves on a historiography that was until recently dominated by polemics between Slovene and Italian historians.

Winkler has chosen a deceptively humble title for his book, and by doing so he may needlessly discourage some readers. The monograph's scope encompasses much more than electoral politics in Trieste in the short period from 1905 to 1909. Winkler in fact presents us with a grand political history of the Trieste region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This allows him to examine the intersection of modernization and increasing national awareness and stratification in Trieste's population.

Winkler paints with a fine brush on a large canvas. Nothing is missing from his demographic and political portrait of Trieste at the beginning of the twentieth century. Indeed, the opening section of the book has the feel of a guided tour, given circa 1905 by an omniscient and multilingual native of the city. Trieste was the true Adriatic jewel of the Habsburg crown. Its per capita wealth and economic development far exceeded that of even Vienna.

During this period, a typically confused Habsburg mixture of city autonomy and imperial centralism informed the political situation in Trieste. Italian, German, and Slovene all served as administrative languages, though Slovene ran a distant third in actual official use. Habsburg authorities watched the urban Italian population with

particular care, guarding against possible “infection” by the followers of Giuseppe Mazzini. This meant that Slovene (as well as other South Slavic nationalists and even socialists) enjoyed more freedom of action than their Italian counterparts in Trieste. Younger urban Slovenes, represented largely by the *narodnjaki* of the Slovene political association *Edinost*, clashed bloodily with the forces of Italian nationalism beginning in the 1860s. Yet on the whole, the predominantly rural ethnic Slovene population presented no obvious challenge to Vienna.

Predictably, conservative Catholic groups vied with the national-liberal *Edinost* for influence among Slovenes, thereby setting a pattern for the major political contest in Slovenia for the first half of the twentieth century. However, in Trieste, the national-liberals largely succeeded in involving the Slovene clergy in a struggle for national and political unity. After 1904, Slovenes in the Trieste region found a natural gathering point in the newly built *Narodni dom* located in the center of the city.

Winkler shows that, as in other regions of the Habsburg Empire, the introduction of parliamentarism in Trieste coincided with the ever more aggressive assertion of national identity. The advocates of elections in Trieste reinforced this trend. Fearing violent clashes between the various nationalities of the Trieste region, they strove to draw homogenous electoral districts for the May 1907 elections, the first after the introduction of universal male suffrage in January 1907.

Edinost fought a lively campaign. The election propaganda distributed by the party attempted to prevent any Slovenes from committing “treason,” i.e. from voting for anyone but *Edinost*. Waving the banners of Yugoslavism and pan-Slavism, the party also reached out to Serbs and Croats in Trieste. Winkler does not flinch from showing that the election slogans of *Edinost* shared the anti-Semitism of the Italian and German nationalists. Moreover, like all parties in Trieste, *Edinost* engaged in questionable and corrupt election tactics. The *narodnjaki* offered skeptical farmers on the outskirts of Trieste debt forgiveness in return for their votes. The election day itself featured a tragicomic scene of the overstretched police running from one of Trieste’s city centers to the other in a vain bid to extinguish street brawls between opposing nationalist and political groups.

The 1907 election results closely mirrored the ethnic composition of the Trieste region. Both the Italian national liberals and the *narodnjaki* gained approximately 30% of the vote. However, the socialists had more impressive results. The Italian and Yugoslav socialists gained a third of the electorate between them. Only the Christian Socialists, with 7% of the total vote, drew significant support from all three of the largest ethnic communities.

Throughout the period under examination, the city remained under the control of the Italian nationalists, while the *narodnjaki* found their core strength in the rural backlands of the Trieste region. Winkler calls this the battle of “*enakopravnost* against *italianatq*.” Not surprisingly, though, a significant portion of the Italian nationalists bore Slavic surnames (and vice versa). An unusual constellation of interests allowed for the various feuding parties of the region to push successfully for new electoral regulations, which took effect in 1908. Winkler also demonstrates that the Italian and Slovene bourgeoisie were fully capable of overlooking narrow national interests; the two groups united to keep wages in the city low.

Winkler is at his best in the sweeping conclusion of the book when he describes the rapidly changing national-political alliances of the 1910s. The national stratification of Trieste had received renewed confirmation at the June 1909 local council elections. Jumping ahead to the 1914 assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand and the beginning of World War I, Winkler shows how the Italians and Austro-Germans of the region vilified the Slovenes as anti-Habsburg Slavs. Yet only a year later, the Austro-Germans and the Slovenes united in hatred against the Italians, as Italy joined the Allied forces in the war. The front came perilously close to Trieste, but fighting never quite crossed the city borders. In the end, Winkler’s nostalgia and sorrow at the passing of multinational Habsburg Trieste, with all of its quirks and faults, is palpable.

This book represents an edited version of a doctoral dissertation written at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. Winkler brings to his topic an unusual personal biography—he is a rare ethnic German from Banja Luka—and an irrepressible enthusiasm for his topic. Winkler demonstrates a solid command of primary and secondary sources. He also shows great familiarity with the languages and varied dialects of the Trieste region.

If Winkler's work has a liability, then it surely lies in the sheer density of the monograph. At times, the mind-numbing attention to even the most trivial detail—does one really need to know the local meteorology to understand the politics of Trieste?—appears as a caricature of an unedited doctoral dissertation. Readers might also be intimidated by the rather belabored “Trieste Election Analysis model” that prefaces the empirical bulk of the study. This model seems a concession to academic requirements, and can be skipped without losing any of the value of the study. In general, one might wish for less detail and for more comparative observations with other contemporary European cities or regions of the late Habsburg Empire. Winkler tantalizingly mentions works on the cities of Riga and Odessa, but only rarely and hesitatingly engages in comparative analysis. The connection between the *narodnjaki* and politics in Slovenia proper could also have been explored in more detail.

All of these, though, are relatively minor reservations about a very impressive work. In sum, Winkler's work stands as a strong if weighty addition to the political history of the multinational northern Adriatic region, and as yet another impressive work in the *Südosteuropäische Arbeiten* series of the Oldenbourg Verlag.

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