

John W. Boyer. *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna: Christian Socialism in Power, 1897-1918*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1995. xvi + 702 pp. \$37.50, cloth, ISBN 978-0-226-06960-9.



Reviewed by Nancy M. Wingfield

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John Boyer's *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna: Christian Socialism in Power, 1897-1918* takes up where his earlier work, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna* (Chicago, 1981) left off, examining the changes in Christian Socialism as it expanded from a local, Vienna-based movement to a mass political party. This exhaustive volume begins with the confirmation of Karl Lueger as Vienna's first Christian Social mayor in 1897 and traces the growth of Christian Socialism into the major political party in Parliament by 1907 through its postwar disarray in 1918.

Far more than simply a political history of Christian Socialism, this is also a history of local, regional, and imperial politics during the last years of the Habsburg Monarchy and the First World War, as the Christian Socials battled the Austrian Social Democrats for the hearts and minds of the Viennese. Boyer carefully delineates the similarities and differences between the two great mass political parties of twentieth-century Austria, both of which emerged in the 1880s, whose positions hardened into diametrically opposed world views during the interwar period. He

also locates Austrian Christian Socialism within the context of local and regional bourgeois politics elsewhere in turn-of-the-century Central Europe. Finally, in one of the most interesting comparative aspects of the book, Boyer discusses the Christian Social Party in terms of American machine politics.

Boyer's Christian Social Party is one of apparent contradiction, a bourgeois protest movement that was "both radically emancipatory and decisively conservative," representing both "archaism and modernity, history and progress" (pp. x, 19). Moreover, it was based on social and national movements with strong local and regional affiliations within *Mittelbuergertum*. From the beginning, contradictions bedeviled the movement and the party; the most critical dilemma was how much of the recent Liberal past could be retained while confronting new economic and social issues (p. 460).

Viennese mayor Karl Lueger remained the preeminent figure in Christian Socialism until his death in 1910, although his position had been challenged by Albert Gessmann, the architect of

the *Reichspartei* that began to emerge after universal manhood suffrage in 1905. Boyer argues that Lueger's ambitions were, in the end, modest: he seemed content with control of "his" Vienna and Lower Austria. And, since the party could play little role in shaping state politics before 1905, its parliamentary delegation being too small, the Christian Socials viewed their relationship with the government and their role in state politics from a local perspective. By 1905, however, the Christian Socials had scored major administrative and political victories. Although Christian Socialism charted consolidation of municipal power between 1897 and 1905, it faced challenges from two state-level "political crusades": George von Schoenerer's *Los von Rom* movement and Victor Adler's Austrian Social Democracy.

Boyer details the intricacies of the Christian Social transformation of Vienna, describing, among other things, Lueger's use of ceremony for political ends and his collection of titles and honors to enhance his position. The author also outlines very real improvements made in the city: for example, the incorporation of Floridsdorf in 1904, increasing the territory of Vienna by more than 50 percent, and the launching of large-scale public works programs that generated favorable publicity for Vienna throughout Europe. For Gessmann and others, however, these advances represented merely the initial steps toward the broader, Imperial power to which Christian Socialism might aspire, should it expand beyond a regional movement.

Christian Social cabinet influence reached its zenith from 1907 to 1911, as the party became the largest faction in parliament with ninety-six deputies. This growth, in part the result of the Alpine Clericals joining the party, would, however, exacerbate existing tensions within the party, given the two groups' divergent relationships to Catholicism and anti-Semitism. The Christian Socials reveled in their patriotic and dynastic role, attempting to preserve a working parliamentary

system, which clearly distinguished them from the German nationalists.

The death of Lueger in early 1910, which Boyer argues marked a turning point in the history of both Christian Socialism and Austrian politics, caused an internal party crisis, deepening fissures that had already been apparent in the party (p. 237). Moreover, the party was involved in cultural conflicts over religion and German nationalism. All of this prevented effective work in the cabinet. Christian Social attempts to gain on social policy by being pliable on military and national issues failed, while obstructionist national radicals received recognition and occasional concessions. Finally, party leaders were less and less willing to work with a government they perceived as increasingly incompetent.

Much of the period from 1911 to 1914 was spent repairing damage to the party from internecine quarrels, including battles over Lueger's successor and over the direction of the party and the urban-rural rift that resulted from inflation in food prices between 1909 and 1911. In addition, the party increasingly had to deal with questions of Church and State and with the *Thronfolger*, Franz Ferdinand, a difficult customer at best.

According to Boyer, the Christian Social Party entered the war "indifferent and overconfident," becoming "progressively more acrimonious, divisive, and shame-ridden" as the war dragged on (p. 428). The Christian Social wartime mayor of Vienna, Richard Weiskirchner, was unable to redress the effects of material deprivation and outright hunger on the civilian population of Vienna. One aspect of this wartime suffering was the revival of the anti-Semitism that Boyer characterizes as a "perennial part of the culture of the Viennese petty and middle bourgeoisie" (p. 427). While some of the older Viennese-based members of the party maintained pan-German sentiments, at the other end of the party cleric Ignaz Seipel was publishing works on the limits of national identity and on

constitutional reform; the latter would have influence on his interwar role in the party. In 1917, the first permanent parliamentary leader of the Christian Social faction was a cleric from Upper Austria. All of this added to the disarray in which the party emerged from the war.

In his conclusion, Boyer highlights the continuities and discontinuities of party history prior to the war and during the interwar era, describing the latter period as a *Kulturkampf* in which two world views--Christian Social and Social Democratic--attempted to gain "cultural hegemony and totalism in a political culture and an electorate almost evenly balanced between them" (p. 458). Finally, Boyer raises questions about the scope and impact of the 1918 revolution, which will presumably be addressed in the general history of Austria he is currently undertaking (p. 453).

This is a long, densely argued tome. Some readers may be put off by the sheer volume of detail, a problem that is not ameliorated by the editorial decision to place almost 200 pages of notes at the back of the book rather than at the bottom of the page. As with any work so broadly conceived, there will be points with which to take issue. It is not clear, for example, that the author has adequately addressed the role of anti-Semitism in the politics of Karl Lueger in particular or in Christian Social politics in general, an issue that has particular resonance given recent Austrian history. Moreover, the "Czech question," which remains at the margins of the narrative, could have been treated in greater depth--perhaps by greater use of the publications of the Collegium Carolinum in Munich.

These caveats aside, John Boyer has produced a book that, together with its companion volume, constitutes a major contribution to the political history of the late Habsburg Monarchy. It will be the standard against which future studies are measured for years to come.

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