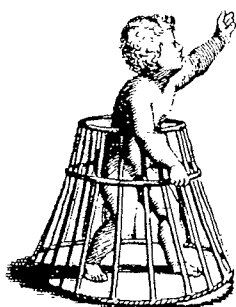


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Childrearing in Central and Eastern Europe

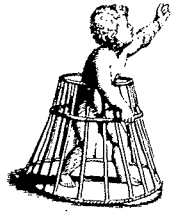
War as a Sacrificial Ritual

***Putin the Aging
Terminator***

***Toiling in the Field
of Emotion***

***French Group-Fantasies
and the Second World War***

Christian Childhoods



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'project'. Behind the headline froth, all across Europe stretched the real fruit of 50 years of integration: a mighty system of government which, to a great extent out of general view, had taken over so much of the power of the nation states to run their own affairs that it was virtually untouched by these political bickerings at the top." (p. 579)

The similar process of creating a North American Union has begun and our usual news sources seem to be ignoring the prospect.

Peter W. Petschauer, *Der Vater und die SS*, Weger: Brixen, 2007.

Reviewed by Christian Lackner
University of Klagenfurt

The radical change of European societies in the first half of the 20th century left no nation involved in the state it had before the two World Wars. The huge Austrian Empire was a unique example of a multi-ethnic experiment, shrunk to a nucleus of just about 7 million people on a territory so small some even do not recognize it today, or believe it is just a part of Germany. Implosions of such nations leave parts of the former populations scattered in various regions, often facing persecutions by the new rulers or simply experiencing a transformation scraping a living as an ethnic minority. These destinies can be seen as an effect of the radical changes and the aftermaths of wars, though causing the fractioning of thousands of families leading to a mass migration in every thinkable direction. Century-long traditions all of a sudden do not seem to count any more, only for the ones affected, searching for their lost identities in a past that has been smashed.

So it happened to the family of Peter W. Petschauer, who, in his book *Der Vater und die SS* [The Father and the SS], has produced a comprehensive research about his whereabouts. As a scientific historian he knows the tools to do such a study, putting his father in the center of observation for two reasons: to find answers about his father's participation in the Nazi regime as an SS officer and to find answers about his own family background, maybe finding patterns that still lead to his present life as a retired Professor for European History at the Appalachian University, North Carolina and as a psychohistorian. By immigrating to the U.S. after WWII, he found one thing he had in common with his father Erich, who never made it there except for later visits. Peter's concerns mainly are related to the fact that his father became a low rank member of the notorious SS troops. But his investigations only found him guilty for trying (with little success) to resettle native Germans from South Tyrol to the core lands

of Germany. At least this put his father into a three-year prisoner of war status in the hands of the American troops, but no proof whatsoever was found that he participated in deportations or even in the killings of Jews or other "enemies" of the Nazi regime.

The very personal reflection of the development of the relationships between all members of the family and their current surrounding social fields has on the other side a scientific approach in delivering this elaborate study. Petschauer masters this double bind by giving explanations or possible alternatives of historical motivations, "why what happened". What impressed me most through reading the book was the odyssey his family had to go through after the collapse of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, leaving their former members behind in a new and mostly hostile surrounding. The "Petschauer-Story" began in "Gottschee," a settlement of Austrians south of today's Ljubljana, the present capital of the Republic of Slovenia. After the fall of the Empire, the following Yugoslavian rulers had no mercy with the Gottschee people, so his father went to attend High School in Klagenfurt, the main town of the federal state of Carinthia in the very south of Austria, or at least what was left of it. As for so many like him, it was a matter of survival after being deprived of his home, taking every chance coming along to make a living. Founding a family was possible only after getting a well paid job in Berlin after university studies in Leipzig—and the Nazis paid better than anybody else at that time, offering him a position at the "Hauptamt fuer deutsche Volkstumsfragen" [Main Department for German National Questions], being responsible for the reintegration of Germans from regions—especially in South Tyrol—that formerly belonged to Germany or Austria—their chief being Heinrich Himmler himself.

Reading the book not only moved me for its inspiring way of managing difficult personal questions in a scientific way. Originating from and—after some years away—still living about 150 miles away from where it (Petschauer's history) all begun, so to say "triggered" my own personal history. I myself was born in Klagenfurt and had a father who served in the "Wehrmacht", and I remember well the arguing I had with him when confronting him with the historical facts. And my father as well has made it possible for me to spend years in the U.S. to study. I know what it feels like not being able to close the chapter of the relationship with somebody who eventually was involved in war activities and what it means to find out, that he at least has not committed any crime. And one other parallel between the "fathers" puzzled me: to find out that they have found their inner peace with their personal history, although having been an active part of a regime which was in many ways compatible with their personal

values that has killed millions and led a people into a suicidal war. The means with which they were able to achieve peace was a certain kind of art (romanticism combined with structuralism) and the—somehow appearing naïve—belief in the Good and the Beautiful (“Das Gute und Schoene”). It was not only what Freud and Melanie Klein meant by “culture building through sublimation of urge”, but more of a way creating a transcendent world of the ideal; sophisticated, apolitical, and in some believe innocent. As if awakening from one alter can only be withstood when diving into another, “better” world right away, so it seemed to me.

I can recommend the book to everyone who wants to gain inside in what actually happened to most of the people living in Austria and/or Germany at that time and what feelings accompanied singular people being hit by major historical turnarounds. The German version will hopefully soon be translated to English, and then: dive in!

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