EXEMPLARY FROM:

Haider, Habsburg (Otto), and the Deleuzian Conceptual Persona:
Austria's Millennial Europe

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The Austrian idea in a European framework is familiar to today's cultural historians. In a very significant way, I argue here, the scary political wraith that is Jörg Haider is a creature of that Austria on the European stage. He is also a creation of the NATO west and its impact on Austria. Haider, however, is the dark twin of that neutral plane, part and parcel of it.

Haider as a Creation of the Machine

Haider's FPÖ - the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, or Austrian Freedom Party -- has a history virtually as long as that of the two parties which have been in coalition for much of the history of Austria's Third Republic (since the 1955 State Treaty). And that history is determined strongly by the Europeanist mindset of the Austrian political scene. After the Second World War, Austria had to prove itself a nation:

Der Nachweis, daß Österreich eine eigene Nation sei, war unabdingbar [nach 1945], um den Staatsvertrag zu erlangen. Die pädagogische Anstrengungen, die von staatlicher Seite nach dem Krieg unternommen wurden, galten nicht der nationalsozialistischen Täterschaft oder dem nationalsozialistischen Mililäufertum, sondern der Implementierung einer österreichischen Identität. (Zöchling 26)
The proof that Austria was an independent nation was crucial after 1945 for achieving the state constitution. Pedagogical attempts put into place after the war by the state did not concern National-Socialist perpetrators or the question of being a collaborator, but rather the implementation of an Austrian identity.

In a 1964 survey, 47% of Austrians thought they were an independent nation; by 1970, it was 66% (Zöchling 27). Despite initial personal doubts about the nation's postwar existence, there was never any doubt about its initial ideological position.
The Moscow Declaration of 1943 had declared Austria the first official victim of Hitler's aggression (see especially Pick), and so the politicians of the era used that as the grounds to argue Austria as independent from Germany, through a series of very difficult negotiations, given that Stalin and the USSR were occupying Austria. Eventually the gambit of Austria as a neutral nation was taken on, a stance called into test very early when Hungary was suppressed in 1956. Austrian politicians ended up calling it an "active neutrality," which was maintained through the era of the legendary Chancellor Bruno Kreisky (1970-83). The era's Austrian politicians retained their focus outside their own borders, concerned about Communists all during the negotiations that went towards the 1955 Staatsvertrag (the founding of the Second Republic). That focus led the two major parties into a great coalition that lasted until 2000. The People's Party (ÖVP) and the Socialist Party (SPÖ) took over the government between them with few perturbations, with the ÖVP holding the chancellorship for the nation's first 15 years, then the SPÖ from 1970-2000 (Rauscher 31).

Left and right joined cause to hold off outside forces, but they were not alone in this outward-directed country:

Aber der heimliche Daseinsgrund des Zusammenschlusses von Parteien, die 1934 noch auseinander geschossen hatten, war das Wissen um das Vorhandensein eines 'dritten Lagers', einer dritten großen Gruppierung -- der ehemaligen Nazis und Deutschnationalen. (Rauscher 28)

But the secret ground for existence and the coalitions of parties that had still shot at each other in 1934 was the knowledge of the existence of a "third camp," a third large group -- of one-time Nazis and German nationalists.

In 1949, there were a half-million "one-time Nazis" (Ehemalige), aside from the purportedly more credible politicians who would form the new Austria. The ÖVP took in some Ehemalige as evidence of their anti-Marxist stance; but the SPÖ took another course, helping those questionable political partisans to form the core of an independent party organization, while keeping their own hands clean: "indem sie die Gründung einer speziell für die 'Ehemaligen' organisierten, vor allem von 'Ehemaligen' repräsentierten Partei -- des 'Verbands der Unabhängigen' (VdU) -- betrieb" (A. Pelinka 48-49). In 1953, the ÖVP had even thought to bring the VdU into the Coalition, but Theodor Körner resisted that suggestion (A. Pelinka 50; Rauscher 34-35). The result, in 1956, was the formation of the Freedom Party (FPÖ) out of the hard core of the VdU (A. Pelinka 50). That FPÖ retained the veneer of a normal party structure for a long time (see Bailer et al., esp. 105 ff., for a history of the FPÖ as a "third camp" and then as a "protest party" [117 ff.]). Kreisky had even entertained the FPÖ as a possible coalition partner against the ÖVP (A. Pelinka 53).
What is most significant about Austria's great coalition is that neither party, left or right, had tended to what international, anti-Communist Austria meant internally, and so that country retained the mark that NATO had expunged: Austria had not denazified, had not rejected its own totalitarian tendencies. Thus all three parties (two in coalition, and the FPÖ) were vulnerable when Simon Wiesenthal started uncovering Nazi fellow-travelers (Mittläufer) in party ranks in the 1970s. In 1975, for example, Wiesenthal found out that Friedrich Peter, FPÖ leader, was an SS man, and he intended to use that information to prevent his entry into a coalition, in the event it became necessary (Pick 107). The FPÖ was thus particularly hard-hit by such attacks against its reputation and potential freedom of motion, which led it to clean house and reposition itself as "liberal," as an "anti-traditional party" (A. Pelinka 54). Peter was in many ways the face of that Austria of Mittläufer pretending to political normalcy, but his position was seen as significant only from the outside, since he was only one of many inside the country.

Wiesenthal's most famous "discovery" was, of course, Kurt Waldheim (although an ORF documentary had already released that information in 1985, before it went public among the Western allies[Pick 160]). But the outside was slow to acknowledge that internal face of Austria, given that this was the era of Bruno Kreisky, who was not only Chancellor, but Jewish:

It is surely significant that Kreisky at no stage . . . thought it important for Austria's world standing to face up to the Nazi era honestly, or to handle the restitution issue as vigorously as Germany. He saw himself as a victim, forced to emigrate to Sweden, and could not bring himself to accept that Austrian society should assume collective responsibility for past actions. (Pick 65)

Like his predecessors, Kreisky did not ban Nazis from public decision-making, in part because he felt his own background was evidence enough of Austria's tolerance (Pick 65). Wiesenthal ended up almost persecuted by Kreisky (Pick 107), who gave up on the FPÖ and began to support Waldheim for the UN secretariat, which happened in 1971. Kreisky had been skeptical of Waldheim's chances, sure that the Soviet Union would veto the candidacy, but he was happy enough to use the opportunity to lead Vienna to be the third UN city -- to live up to international Austria. Waldheim himself was simply planning ahead to become Austria's President (Pick 114-115). And so Kreisky played high political roller on the international scene, not always to the best result. (One example was the 1973 Schönau crisis, where an Arab terrorist kidnapped some Soviet Jews who were being resettled, using Austria and the UNO-City as transit stations -- Golda Meir personally chastised him when he backed out of the confrontation [Pick 122]).
The end of an Austria without an internal historical face was in sight. In 1983, chancellor-candidate Sinowatz briefly went into coalition with the FPÖ, but he resigned as chancellor in 1986 after Waldheim become president and refused to step down, preferring to serve out his term until 1992. That 1986 election was the first in which Jörg Haider was head of his party. He became Landeshauptmann, but lasted only two years because of pro-Nazi statements (Zöchling 24). In 1991, the FPÖ had 23% of the vote in Vienna.

The FPÖ began its reign, as noted, as a universal party of resistance, anti-internationalist and anti-Altparteien (anti- ÖVP and -SPÖ): "Jörg Haider hat die FPÖ zu einer universellen Oppositionspartei geformt und ist, von Bruno Kreisky abgesehen, der erfolgreichste Politiker der Zweiten Republik" (Zöchling 8). After having been denied an earlier application in 1987 because of possible Russian objections, Austria entered the EU on 1 January 1995, with Vranitzky as Chancellor (Pick 190). In January, 1997, Vranitzky was succeeded by Viktor Klima. In the September 1999 vote, Haider got 27.5 in Upper Austria and 27.2% of the national vote, at which time Wolfgang Schüssel of the ÖVP went into coalition with the FPÖ and thereby became chancellor. When all of the EU protested and raised complaints against the FPÖ even more vehement than those raised against Waldheim, Haider was forced to resign from party leadership (and hence from any cabinet pretenses) in February 2000. A party that had garnered 5% of the vote in 1986, the year when Haider assumed its leadership, had won over 27% 14 years later, becoming a factor in coalition-building.

This is the internal face of Austria's conceptual persona. Born in 1950, Haider is part and parcel of the FPÖ's inheritance of the Nazi traditions. His father was in the Hitler youth by the time he was 15, a happy national socialist, in Bad Goisern (Zöchling 30). He was arrested for graffiti, and escaped to Bavaria, where an "Austrian legion" was gathering -- he was SA by the time he was 18 (Zöchling 31). Haider's mother was also National Socialist. At the end of the Second World War, his father was interned in a work camp as a collaborator; his mother remembered being called "Nazi Sau." They stayed in Bad Goisern with many like-minded individuals (Zöchling 37; see also Riedl for biography).

Jörg Haider was raised as a day scholar among elite boarding students in a Gymnasium in Bad Ischl (Zöchling 39), as his father eked out a living as a party functionary in the FPÖ. Following the conservative and Deutschnationale traditions of his region, Jörg joined a school fraternity and then a dueling fraternity in college (Zöchling 41; 75 ff.). His fencing dummy was purportedly labeled Simon Wiesenthal (Zöchling 43). In 1986, at the time his career was launched, he inherited from an
uncle an estate worth millions -- "Bärental" in Carenthia, an estate that was entjudet, "liberated from the Jews" (stolen without restitution, then or subsequently), during the Third Reich (Zöchling 19). Haider was, however, never loathe to praise the Nazis. In front of a 1995 meeting of Kamaradschaft IV, a group commemorating the SS, he praises them as "anständige Menschen" (respectable people), and then concludes:

Nachdem wir aber eine Zukunft haben wollen, werden wir jenen Linken [. . .] beibringen, dass wir nicht umzubringen sind und dass sich Anständigkeit in unserer Welt allemal noch durchsetzt, auch wenn wir momentan vielleicht nicht mehrheitsfähig sind. Aber wir sind den anderen überlegen . . . (cited in Scharsach and Kuch 25)

*Once we have decided to have a future, however, we will have to tell that left that we cannot be killed and that respectability will always prevail in our world, even if we at the moment are not in the majority. But we are superior to the others . . .*

Haider's ascent culminated in spring, 2000, when he achieved 42.3% in the Carenthian elections. The ÖVP and SPÖ decision not to work together in 1995 (Zöchling 59) opened the door for Wolfgang Schüssel and the ÖVP to take his party (but not him) into the coalition (see A. Pelinka, 64; P. Pelinka; and Plasser and Ulram for the party demographics [esp. 136]).

Haider's rhetoric continues until today in that tradition of National Socialism. He complains about "official history" (*offizielle Geschichtsschreibung* [Scharsach and Kuch 33]), expresses a prevalent anti-Semitism, and underplays the Holocaust (Scharsach and Kuch 36), while other FPÖ politicians deny Auschwitz (Scharsach and Kuch 45). His ascent was facilitated by things like the "Austria First" manifesto (Scharsach and Kuch 82-83), which greatly overstated the numbers of "foreigners" in Austrian public life for his own strategic purposes and argued that they are lazy and guilty of overwhelming the true Austrian people, in an act of Überfremdung (Scharsach and Kuch 91 ff.). He takes over the Hitler designation of Austria as a Mißgeburt, a miscarriage, to argue that Austria and Germany should have been reunited. He and his party challenge every detractor in court (making notable strides against the ORF, for example [Scharsach and Kuch 159 f, 238 ff.]) and call for the establishment of the "Third Republic" as a corrective against the "old parties," Altparteien, and their legacy -- all vocabulary that is familiar from Europe's fascist parties, including that of Jean Marie Le Pen in France (Scharsach and Kuch 229; see Eibicht for a rightist vision of Haider).

Haider's career, like those of his predecessors, clearly grew up with Austria, just as the VdU grew into the FPÖ. His is the voice inside Austria, the voice of the
compromises that allowed the internationalist-European Austria to be the model for the new Europe, the millennial Europe. But the Europe of which millennium?

Some Conclusions: Austria's Conceptual Personae.

What is, then, the unique assemblage of internal history that makes this Austria-internal political nightmare just as much a part of Europe as Waldheim's coy internationalism? What about this map of Austria -- this plane of concepts -- makes it an event of such persistence and such virulence?

First and foremost, while all the figures involved profess democracy as a core value for their European ideals, they maintain a sense that government, and particularly party participation in it, participates in Europe, not necessarily the individuals of the nation. This focus on the government has both caused problems within the EU and facilitated Haider's rise, since it is the governments who are generally perceived to be key in decision-making, over the rights of the people.

Austria's Great Coalition had this problem from the start, since the two ruling parties divided all civil service jobs among themselves and their members -- the so-called Proporz, which made a party membership book a virtual sine qua non for civil service jobs. But that same division also made the state structure inflexible for new parties, and kept new interests at bay, as Haider deprecates in his repeated references to the Altparteien. There is in this image, therefore, little picture for individual initiative, which makes figures like Haider seem all the more startling, original, in comparison to the bureaucratic face of the standard European party politician.

Beyond that, all these images of Europe and Austria stress federalism as the core. In a benign reading of these concepts, federalism is an inclusive force that the Austro-Hungarian empire has embodied for a fictional millennium. Yet in a reading like Haider's, that federalism can just as easily mean separate-but-equal status for ethnic groups. He can thus espouse Europe while arguing for foreigners to be excluded from Austria -- his Austria is ethnically German (a historic fiction), and other ethnic groups that were once part of it deserve their own, equal states (not his).

The "Europe" on which these figures build their authorization is also an indeterminate ideal, in ethnic-national terms, as the various debates about the Euro and the loss of individual national identity with the loss of individual currencies suggests, as well. It does not support individual interests, conceived of in ethnic-nationalist terms. Thus it allows for continued blindness about the legacy and persistence of the alternate model, nationalist thinking -- the legacy particularly of Nazi Germany. In Austria's case, it had not only suppressed its own legacy of Ehemalige, one-time Nazis, but it was
allowed to drag its feet about other forms of restitution (see Pick 212 ff.). The art sale from the Mauerbach holdings of art assets with lost owners (Pick 219), and several recent museum cases where art held in state museums proved to have Nazi-era provenance, all argue for the persistence of such negligence, of ethnic history in the face of humanist cosmopolitanism.

Finally, that Europe is predicated heavily on a model of competition and on a geographic unity with a clear pattern of center and periphery. Not only do most Slavic stats lie outside this map, but even Great Britain seems peripheral to it. And it all too easily becomes "Fortress Europe" (Festung Europa, another Haider concept), a bulwark of a vague Western humanism, complete with the Protestant work ethic and Christian values, armed against the non-Christian nations of the world on the one hand, and against American economic imperialism on the other. This Europe is post-national, but not necessarily multicultural (in Haider's case, by no means multicultural). This Europe has a historical legitimacy based on a shared experience, not on the national borders imposed haphazardly by two World Wars and a subsequent Cold War.

Austria's millennial Europe is thus a unique game board for professional politicians to pay on, with some benign games and others not. They agree that the new Europe must lie outside the nationalist Europe of the Cold War, but at the same time, they choose to ignore other consequence of their reliance on the very state apparatuses that perpetuated that war in other terms. Haider and Waldheim assert forms of authority drawn from that Austrian Europe; they look on that authority as corresponding to the humanist legacy of the Enlightenment, had nationalism not perturbed Europe's clear development over the last century. Most crucially, they overlook how exclusive that legacy is --a thousand-year falsification of its own, based on the image of Europe as the heart of the civilized west, rather than the recipient of the ebbs and tides of immigration and innovation for two millennia. Their Europe has roots instead of tides; foundations instead of trade routes; stability and identity rather than functions and missions. The Austria at its heart is therefore crucial: a laboratory for the costs and benefits of post-nationalism and the European ideal in a world that decries imperialism, but perpetuates many of its features under the image of a new benign world order.

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