

musicological analyses (indeed, the chapter titled “Approaching the Inexpressible” that fuses music and text is particularly difficult without a recording or score close at hand), while at other moments his more general discussion might be tiresome for the reader already familiar with some of these tales. As such it is difficult to imagine the reader who would remain engaged with the book from start to finish. Ultimately, the book reads like a love letter to Mahler, at once both enthralling and frustrating.

And yet, Stephen Johnson’s latest book presents us with a poetic and beautiful narrative that helps us see Mahler in new ways and simultaneously reminds us of why we fell in love with the composer’s music in the first place. Perhaps I too have over-sentimentalized, but this book—whatever its flaws—enriches our understanding of Mahler. Isn’t that wondrous in itself?

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Kochne, Ernst Rudolf. Die unbeabsichtigte Republik: Deutschösterreich 1918–1920

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In October 1918, the Habsburg monarchy was nearing its military and political collapse. As a consequence, the young emperor Charles invited the individual national groups in the Austrian half of the monarchy to establish national councils. After other nationalities had pressed ahead, the German deputies of the Austrian parliament assembled on 21 October 1918 and initiated the establishment of their new state, thus exceeding the mandate given by the emperor. This revolutionary step was taken in a somber mood, especially among more conservative deputies. Prior to the final disintegration of the monarchy, the Social Democrats supported the creation of a German-Austrian state that would subsequently either unite with other Habsburg successor states in a voluntary confederation or join Germany. At that point, the conservative Christian Socials still hoped for the confederation model. A small independent German-speaking Austria was not among the desired options.

The emerging German-Austrian institutions still coexisted with their imperial counterparts in an indeterminate fashion, whereas corresponding bodies among other nationalities had assumed power more openly. Following the revolution in Germany, the mood began to shift in favor of a republic. On 12 November 1918, the deputies, despite remaining skepticism among individual conservatives, unanimously supported the law that established German-Austria as a democratic republic and simultaneously declared it to be a constituent part of the German republic. The question of the republic’s borders and its relationship to Germany proved to be subject to Allied decision making, however. The ambiguous position of Emperor Charles, who had withdrawn from government but not abdicated, was subsequently resolved by his not completely voluntary departure from Austria.

The Austrian republic defined itself as a new political entity. Foreign Secretary Otto Bauer complained bitterly that the victorious powers had imposed the hated designation Austria upon the new republic and had thus associated it with the defunct empire. Chancellor Karl Renner insisted that all successor states were equally heirs to the Habsburg monarchy, whose political decisions, moreover, had been taken by a small elite and not by the general population of any nationality. The Allies, however, insisted on treating the new republic as the legal successor to their defeated enemy. A particularly contentious issue was the allocation of the former monarchy’s territory and assets. Whereas many border questions ultimately were decided by the victorious Allies, the distribution of assets was usually resolved by negotiations between successor governments.

While the three main political camps, the Catholic and conservative Christian Socials, the Social Democrats, and the National-Liberals, cooperated pragmatically during the immediate postwar crisis, they began to attack each other more harshly as the elections for a new parliament drew close in early 1919. These elections could only be held in less than two-thirds of the territory claimed by German-Austria because the remaining districts had been occupied by other successor states. This reduction especially concerned the German-speaking regions of the Bohemian Lands. Consequently, the German nationalist, or National-Liberal, camp lost many of its strongholds. Austrian politics turned into a contest between red and black, that is, between the Social Democrats and the Catholic-Conservatives.

Societal tensions increased, which also expressed itself in the controversies about workers' councils, which the center-right parties considered dangerous alternatives to legitimate government. The establishment of Soviet republics in neighboring Hungary and Bavaria encouraged Communist coup attempts. The subsequent defeat of these revolutionary experiments also brought a backlash in Austria. At first, the Social Democrats began to lose their former dominance in government; thereafter, their Grand Coalition with the Catholic-Conservatives began to crumble. In a final effort, the major parties agreed on a new constitution. In late 1920, however, the Conservatives switched coalition partner and started the series of center-right governments that were to dominate interwar Austria.

In his composite conclusion, which also contains two excursuses, Kochne presents his assessment of the nature of the Austrian revolution, of the viability of the new state, and of its national identity. His arguments are sound and much needed in an otherwise largely descriptive work, but they are not always built upon the preceding analysis. His fundamental conclusion that Austria's First Republic failed due to a lack of agreement on its purpose and fundamental structure remains plausible, however.


Die unbeabsichtigte Republik will not significantly alter our perception of the early Austrian republic. The study does not provide theory or comparison; it condenses familiar sources and literature and intersperses them with didactic comments. Its bibliography is almost exclusively in German; even the few English texts cited are mainly by Austrian scholars. Analytically, the author tends to project current conditions back in time, which also expresses itself in rather apodictic dismissals of the alternative solutions pursued by contemporary political leaders.

In spite of these weaknesses, the study might be valuable for readers searching for a concise summary of Austria's passage from monarchy to republic. Even if some pivotal assessments would have profited from concrete documentation, Kochne has made competent use of the relevant sources. Thus, *Die unbeabsichtigte Republik* provides a solid introduction to the legal and parliamentary history of the early Austrian republic.

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Kornbluth, Andrew. *The August Trials: The Holocaust and Postwar Justice in Poland*

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A searing dedication “to the innocent” sets the tone for the sometimes brutal and often poetic narrative by historian Andrew Kornbluth. His prize-winning *The August Trials* is already an important book for those of us who study the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, the memory of the Holocaust everywhere, and