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Here we have a really valuable collection of essays about the conduct of national minority politics during the inter-war period, particularly as it involved ethnic German groups in Central and Eastern Europe. The contributions are wide-ranging and extremely well researched, making the volume a 'must read' for anyone with an interest in the period and region. Apparently the volume was inspired by the work of Wolfgang Kessler, the former director of the Martin Opitz Library in Herne who was active in the Commission for the History and Culture of Germans in South East Europe and the Commission for the History of Germans in Poland. Both organisations sponsored a conference in 2011 which, in turn, led to the publication of this most welcome edited collection.

The aims of the study are quite modest. Given that research into the politics of national minorities remains in its infancy, it intends to provide insights into the sheer diversity of themes that run through the field rather than to provide an overarching, synthesising interpretation. But even here there are gaps, as the editors acknowledge readily. So, for instance, the volume could say much more about coalition-building between different minorities, shared regional interests and the participation of minority politicians in majority political parties; but the fact that the work flags up such possibilities for future research certainly should be counted as a major strength.

What, then, of the contributions? Gerhard Seewann examines loyalty and the strategies pursued by national minorities. Central here was the challenge posed by the gradually increasing drive to create a German *Volks-gemeinschaft* ever more supposed to embrace German communities abroad – a project which ever more involved an expectation of loyalty to Berlin. In this connection, Seewann contrasts 'vertical loyalty' binding the citizen

to the state and 'horizontal loyalty' running between diverse social groups. In both cases, demands for loyalty were used as means to impose discipline on given communities.

Stefan Dyroff discusses how ethnic German minority leaders interacted with the League of Nations. Quite rightly, he takes the ambitious European Nationalities Congress as centrally important here. The organisation was home to some of the most progressive minority thinkers of the day, although it also saw the selling out of principled politics in favour of something much more cynical and partisan during the 1930s. How ethnic Germans like Ewald Ammende and Paul Schie-mann attempted, ultimately unsuccessfully, to work with the figures populating the offices of the League provides a fine insight into the character and short-comings not only of minority activists, but also of the functionaries of state and international organisations at the time. Particularly interesting from the essay emerge Wilhelm von Medinger (an ethnic German from Czechoslovakia who, prior to 1918 had been a citizen of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) and Kurt Graebe (a German from Poland and formerly of the German Empire). Both understood the League's system of minority petitions as a way to put pressure on their governments, although their political strategies varied according to the character of the state in which they lived. Interestingly, Dyroff maintains that only small and weak minorities (such as some Ukrainian and Russian groups) hoped that a petition would be straightforwardly successful and lead the League to try to dictate a course of action for a given state. By contrast, more powerful groups, like the Germans, were more realistic and saw the petition system primarily as a tool for exerting pressure on governments. The paper also highlights that some groups, such as the Germans in Poland, failed to achieve their potential as political actors because they lacked really able community leaders.

Ferenc Eiler probes the attempts made by Hungarian statesman Count Bethlen to build a consensus involving German and Hungarian minorities in the states around Hungary. Eiler follows Dyroff to emphasise the importance of the European Nationalities Congress

in Central and Eastern Europe. He stresses for example, both that it provided a motor force promoting academic study of minority issues in the region and that the Hungarian and German governments alike tried to instrumentalise the organisation for their own ends.

Ingo Eser discusses the possibilities for co-operation which existed between Germans in Poland and other minorities in respect of education policy. Here, quite rightly, the author highlights the importance of education as a means to strengthening loyalty to the state as well as it being a tool for the construction and consolidation of consolidating of a given minority's identity.

Hanna Kozińska-Witt analyses co-operation as it took place between Jews and non-Jews in Cracow's local representative body. This city, which was neither particularly anti-Semitic nor philo-Semitic, was home to a significant and heterogeneous Jewish minority. The community consisted of Orthodox, Hassidic and assimilated groups, Zionists and Socialists alike too, but it provided representatives for about 20 percent of the seats available in the self-administration. On this basis, Jewish groups became potentially important coalition partners for majority-based political parties. Socialists and Democrats alike were ready to work with Jewish groups and the author goes on to highlight how local cultures of co-operation might have been important as determinants of policy for at least some national minorities.

Martin Moll looks at efforts by the German minorities living in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to internationalise their disputes with the government. As the paper points out, some states were the subject of petitions sent to the League of Nations much more than others. So, for example, 137 petitions concerned Poland's treatment of minorities, 81 concerned Romania and, in third place for the most petitions submitted, 47 concerned the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Moll's paper provides a fascinating study of how ethnic German gripes were manipulated onto the international plane and, in particular, highlights the importance of the arguments over especially the German House in Cilli.

Zoran Janjetović details the strategy and

practice of the 'Party of Germans in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes' which was founded in 1921 in order to fight for the equality of the German minority which comprised 4.3 percent (or 512,207 members) of the territory's population World War I. In 1923 it experienced the considerable success of having eight deputies elected to parliament although, much less happily, it never attained its goals.

Norbert Spannenberger examines Germans in Hungary and the possibility of emancipation projects pursued by the means of 'ethnisation', as local communities transformed themselves from political objects to subjects. In the process, he aims to give a nuanced picture of Hungary's Germans, not least of the character of Jakob Bleyer who, in the past, has been characterised as an „awakener of Germanism“.

Ottmar Trașcă dissects problems of loyalty which faced especially German minorities in Romania in the 1930s, particularly in the light of the growing influence of National Socialism which led to the community's radicalisation between 1938 and 1939. Natali Stegmann discusses the internationalisation of minority affairs from the perspective of welfare initiatives and Michal Schvarc looks at the position of Germans in Slovakia in the years 1938–39. His article provides an interesting analysis of Tiso's minority politics and how it responded to domestic and international pressures alike as they manifested themselves at the time of the break-up of Czechoslovakia. Here, discrimination against Slovakia's Jews emerged as early as November 1938.

John Hiden concludes the collection with an examination of the Association of German Minorities in Europe. This was a key grouping established by Ewald Ammende and Rudolf Brandsch in 1922 which provided a platform for German minorities to explore and promote their interests. The organisation pursued broadly progressive ends in the 1920s, not least by providing influential representatives to the European Nationalities Congress. Unfortunately the Association was not strong enough to withstand the onslaught of National Socialism which made itself felt by 1932 at the latest, the year in which Paul Schiemann gave his famous speech 'the New Nationalist Wave'. Warning with com-

plete clarity against the dire influence emanating from Berlin, the speech marked the point at which Schiemann departed the organisation. From 1933 on, the Association became ever more closely aligned with National Socialism's needs, particularly from 1936 when Konrad Henlein took over its leadership.

Here, then, we have a collection of essays which is wide-ranging and which shows a really fine understanding of many aspects of minority issues in Central and Eastern Europe. As it discusses them, the study moves the focus of historiography away from nation states and towards non-state actors. Here, particularly important and worthy of further investigation is the European Nationalities Congress. Although certainly an imperfect institution, for several years after its initial establishment in 1925 it managed to float free of government control and achieved some independent and unusual work. We hope there will be plenty more studies of this organisation, indeed of the European minorities which it served.

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