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PAN-GERMAN IDENTITY AND THE PRESS IN AUSTRIA, 1933-1938

Julie Thorpe

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how and why Austrians thought of themselves as German in the years before Austria's annexation to the Nazi state. It argues that Austrians constructed their identity in ways that signified particular regional and local as well as universal belonging to the national community. These particularist and universalist aspects of Austrian identity are encapsulated in the term pan-Germanism, that is, the belief that by virtue of its historic ties to other Central European nationalities, Austria was uniquely both a German state and a part of the German nation.

By comparing three German-nationalist newspapers in Styria, Salzburg and Vienna between 1933 and 1938, this thesis demonstrates, firstly, the regional nuances of pan-German discourses in Austria and, secondly, the extent to which these discourses competed or overlapped with concurrent National Socialist and Austrofascist versions of pan-Germanism. However, it argues that German-nationalist editors and their readers did not always support exclusive Nazi designs for Austro-German unity, but negotiated their belonging to the national community in ways that often converged with Austrofascist ideas about Austria's identity as both a German state and a part of the German nation. Pan-Germanism was thus a contested national identity in which Austrofascists, German-nationalists and National Socialists all had a stake to claim prior to 1938.

This thesis fills a gap in the historiography of interwar Austria both in terms of methodology and sources, and in its overall assessment of the period preceding *Anschluss*. It is the only study of interwar Austria that investigates national identity through the lens of the daily newspaper. While newspapers have formed the basis of other studies of national identity elsewhere in Europe, this approach has not been undertaken for Austria. Moreover, the focus on three German-nationalist newspapers, rather than a systematic survey of the entire Austrian press in the years between 1933 and 1938, allows for an in-depth study of individual editors and newspapers writing for a select readership in particular regional settings. It also allows for a comparison of newspapers from a similar political-cultural milieu in order to draw broader conclusions about the polarisation of society and politics in interwar Austria. In particular, this thesis challenges the received wisdom of the *Lager* theory in Austrian political history by showing the overlaps between political-cultural milieux in interwar Austria.

With regard to its overall assessment of the years between 1933 and 1938, this thesis also makes an original contribution to debates on 'Austrofascism'. Studies of comparative fascism have reached a consensus that the regime in Austria between 1934 and 1938, like many of the other regimes in interwar Europe, was authoritarian but not fascist. This thesis suggests, on the contrary, that the points of convergence between the German-nationalist press, Austrofascism and National Socialism reveal in substance, if not in structure, a fascistic brand of nationalism in interwar Austria: pan-Germanism.