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Verena Schöberl, *“Es gibt ein grosses und herrliches Land, das sich selbst nicht kennt...es heisst Europa.” Die Diskussion um die Paneuropaidee in Deutschland, Frankreich und Grossbritannien 1922-1933*. Berlin: Lit Verl, 2008. 404 pp. € 34.90 (pb). ISBN 978-3-8258-1104-4.

Review by Talbot Imlay, Université Laval.

The product of a PhD thesis completed at the Humboldt Universität in 2006-07 under the direction of Professor Heinrich August Winkler, Verena Schöberl's study examines the public debates over European unity from 1922 to 1933. More precisely, she discusses and compares the reception in Britain, France and Germany of Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi's project for a political and economic union of continental European countries – what he called “Paneuropa”. Having consulted a truly staggering number of contemporary publications (newspapers, reviews, monographs) as well as parliamentary debates and government records in the three countries concerned, Schöberl offers not only a wide-ranging analysis of reactions to Paneuropa—one moreover that highlights both the strengths and weaknesses of Coudenhove-Kalergi's project—but also a fascinating portrait of ideas about European unity in general during the 1920s. Where she is less successful, however, is in fulfilling her stated goal of contributing to the “social history of European integration” (p. 16).

Schöberl's decision to focus on Paneuropa's reception is certainly shrewd in light of Anita Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler's detailed study of Coudenhove-Kalergi and his movement which appeared in 2004.[1] No less shrewdly, this choice of focus allows her to sidestep the controversy surrounding Coudenhove-Kalergi, who has been portrayed alternatively as a heroic trail-blazer for European unity and as a reactionary figure with dictatorial tendencies and fascist sympathies.[2] But there is a more substantial justification for her interest in Paneuropa's reception, namely that Coudenhove-Kalergi himself placed great store on publicity and propaganda. Following the publication in 1923 of his book *Pan-Europa*, Coudenhove-Kalergi quickly created a European organization (Paneuropean Union) whose central office was in Vienna, as well as a journal entitled *Paneuropa*. Imbued with missionary zeal, Coudenhove-Kalergi sought to win converts to his cause, adopting two approaches. The first one was to convince leading politicians of the merits of European unity. Although he did enjoy some success in this regard, gaining for example public endorsements from Louis Loucheur, Aristide Briand and Edouard Herriot in France and from Paul Löbe, Konrad Adenauer and Joseph Wirth in Germany, Coudenhove-Kalergi soon discovered that, once in government, political leaders did not necessarily feel bound by their earlier and often vague expressions of support. Particularly disappointing for him in this regard was Herriot's *Cartel des gauches* government in France during 1924-25. Afterwards, Coudenhove-Kalergi occasionally talked of creating a mass movement to unite Europe from below but, in the end, he preferred an approach that was somewhat less elitist than the first, concentrating now on the intelligentsia rather than on political leaders. “The way to win public opinion for Pan-Europa”, he wrote in 1925, “is to convince the informed minority [*verständige Minderheit*] which for its part should then persuade the uninformed majority” (p. 68). For Coudenhove-Kalergi, Paneuropa's fate came to depend on it becoming a subject of discussion for interwar Europe's commentariat.

Thanks in no small part to Coudenhove-Kalergi's extensive contacts and his tireless efforts as a publicist and propagandist, Paneuropa did, in fact, provoke a good deal of public discussion which, as Schöberl

shows, assumed different forms in each of the three countries. It was in Germany that the subject received the most attention. Indeed, in 1926 Karl Christian von Loesch, the ethnologist and champion of German minorities abroad, complained that one could hardly pick up a newspaper or magazine in Germany without coming across an article on European union (p. 142). Only in Germany, moreover, did an “engaged debate” occur in Parliament over Paneuropa and European unity more generally (p. 20). The discussion in Britain, by contrast, was anaemic. Despite the efforts of several prominent figures, most notably Wickham Steed and Leopold Amery, Coudenhove-Kalergi failed to generate much interest for his project—a reaction, Schöberl notes, that reflected the reality of Britain’s “certain distance” from Europe (p. 148). Revealingly, whereas an official German Paneuropa committee existed in 1925, the creation of a British committee would have to wait until 1939. As for France, the discussion of Paneuropa fell somewhere between the German and British experiences, although far closer to the former than the latter. With the active backing of Briand and the Quai d’Orsay, an official Paneuropa committee was founded in 1927; but well before then Coudenhove-Kalergi’s project had found a public echo. Schöberl claims that Paneuropa attracted greater support from French than from German intellectuals, but the more striking point that emerges from her study is the broad interest that European unity aroused in France. Whereas in Germany favourable voices could be heard predominately on the Left and centre-Left, in France they came from a more politically heterogeneous group, ranging from Alfred Fabre-Luce and Joseph Barthélemy on the one hand to Romain Rolland and Léon Blum on the other. Similarly, notwithstanding von Loesch’s complaint, it appears that a broader range of publications discussed Paneuropa in France than in Germany: among the French newspapers that devoted space to the subject were *Action Française*, *Le Figaro*, *L’Œuvre* and *Le Populaire de Paris*. While Schöberl concludes that the French were “more open-minded” [*aufgeschlossener*] than the Germans, probably a more important factor was the stronger presence of pacifism within both the Left and Right in post-war France—a pacifism that often expressed itself in a desire for Franco-German reconciliation. As a fervent advocate of the latter, Coudenhove-Kalergi could count on a favourable hearing for Paneuropa from various quarters in France.

Schöberl’s principal argument, however, is that the public discussion that Coudenhove-Kalergi so eagerly sought, proved to be largely counter-productive. One reason is that Paneuropa attracted a good deal of criticism, principally in Germany and France but also in Britain. Schöberl attributes this susceptibility to criticism to Coudenhove-Kalergi’s refusal to associate his movement with any political party or tendency, rendering Paneuropa vulnerable to attack from all sides. Thus Communists and some socialists accused Paneuropa of being a capitalist front, an accusation fuelled by the aid Coudenhove-Kalergi received from prominent industrialists, while sections of the Right in Germany and France each denounced it as an instrument of the other country’s foreign policy. Here, incidentally, Coudenhove-Kalergi’s shifting position on the question of treaty revision (especially regarding Germany’s borders) did nothing to reduce confusion. But for Schöberl, Paneuropa’s principal difficulties arose not so much from its critics as from its sympathizers, many of whom sought to exploit Coudenhove-Kalergi’s project for their own narrow ends. Included in this group were partisans of a Christian West (*Abendland*) that would exclude Turkey, a continental European bloc that would exclude Britain (but not Europe’s colonies), an anti-bolshevist Europe that would exclude Russia/Soviet Union, and a German-directed Mitteleuropa that would exclude most of Western Europe. The problem was not only that the din of competing projects drowned out Coudenhove-Kalergi’s own voice, but also that his proposals suffered from guilt by association with a host of partisan causes. To cite one example: in 1929-30, when Briand floated his idea of a European federation, Coudenhove-Kalergi’s ties with the French foreign minister helped to confirm suspicions in Germany that Paneuropa was working for the Quai d’Orsay. Paradoxically, then, the very diversity of Paneuropa’s sympathizers appears to have been a weakness as Coudenhove-Kalergi found his project being attacked for being one thing and its opposite at the same time. Thus for some people Paneuropa was too pro-French and anti-German while for others it was too pro-German and anti-French.

Schöberl suggests that Paneuropa would have enjoyed greater success if Coudenhove-Kalergi had been less determined to remain non-partisan, if he had, in other words, been more willing to enter the political fray. Perhaps so. But Paneuropa's difficulties stemmed from other sources as well. The project itself was vague: following the publication of *Pan-Europa*, Coudenhove-Kalergi regularly provided glosses on his initial proposals, often with little regard for ensuing contradictions. His changing views on treaty revision have already been mentioned. On other issues, he simply refused to be pinned down, most notably perhaps on that of the supranational vs. inter-governmental elements of his project. A more fundamental problem, however, was that public support for European unity was neither deep nor coherent across Europe. True believers were few and far between while no two sympathizers could agree on what a united Europe should look like. The result was a bewildering array of ideas, proposals and projects for Europe, some of which—one suspects—were not taken that seriously even by their own authors. In any case, if, as Schöberl clearly shows, many of them shared common elements with Paneuropa, there is no obvious reason why Coudenhove-Kalergi's project should emerge as the clear favourite of Europe's "informed public".

This point raises the question of Paneuropa's relationship to later developments. Typically, Coudenhove-Kalergi's project and movement figure in histories of European integration as a precursor.[3] And Schöberl, I think, has something similar in mind when she talks of a social history of European integration: in helping to publicize European unity during the 1920s, Coudenhove-Kalergi and his Paneuropean Union movement contributed to constructing Europe after 1945. But the relationship between Paneuropa and European integration was arguably less positive in that Coudenhove-Kalergi's efforts offered an object lesson in how not to go about uniting Europe. If, as Schöberl argues, Coudenhove-Kalergi ultimately failed it is not so much because Paneuropa went unrealized as it is because his approach to European unity could not work. As so much of the recent historiography on European integration after 1945 underscores, Europe was first and foremost the work of governments and not of a wider public, however informed or uninformed. The shape that Europe took (and continues to take) was determined not by public debate but by hard negotiating between officials determined to extract maximum benefit for their countries.[4] Here, one might add, are to be found the origins of the European Union's much-maligned "democratic deficit." But the more pertinent point concerns the subject matter of a social history of European integration. If postwar European integration is best viewed as an inter-governmental enterprise, then the various participants in the public debate on European unity are arguably less important than the small number of political leaders and high-ranking officials who constructed Europe behind close doors. To be sure, this tiny group of people was not cut off from larger debates; still, it might be better to begin a social history of European integration with a collective biography of this group. As for Coudenhove-Kalergi, he would perhaps have been wiser to stick with his first approach—that of converting Europe's political leaders.

NOTES

[1] Anita Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, *Botschafter Europas. Richard Nikolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi und die Paneuropa-Bewegung in den zwanziger und dreißiger Jahren* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2004). Although Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler's book is not the first study of the Paneuropa movement, she is the first scholar to have systematically used the movement's archives located in Moscow. But also see Lubor Jilek, "Paneurope dans les années vingt: la réception du projet en Europe centrale et occidentale," *Relations internationales* 72 (1992): 409-432.

[2] Compare Patricia Wiedemer, "The Idea behind Coudenhove-Kalergi's Pan-European Union," *History of European Ideas* 16 (1993): 827-833; with Ulrich Wyrwa, "Richard Nikolaus Graf Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894-1972) und die Paneuropa-Bewegung in den zwanziger Jahren," *Historische Zeitschrift* 283 (2006): 103-22.

[3] For example, see Élisabeth du Réau, *L'idée d'Europe au XXe siècle. Des mythes aux réalités* (Brussels : Ed. Complexe, 1996), pp. 81-8; and the entry for Coudenhove-Kalergi in Yves Bertoncini et al, eds., *Dictionnaire critique de l'Union européenne* (Paris : Armand Colin, 2008), pp. 92-93.

[4] For useful discussions of the historiography on European integration, see Wolfram Kaiser, "From State to Society?: The Historiography of European Integration," in Michelle Cini and Angela K. Bourne, eds., *Palgrave Advances in European Union Studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 190-208; and Wilfried Loth, "Beiträge der Geschichtswissenschaft zur Deutung der Europäischen Integration," in Loth and Wolfgang Wessels, eds., *Theorien europäischer Integration* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2001), pp. 87-106.

Talbot Imlay
Université Laval
Talbot.imlay@hst.ulaval.ca

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