

In Remembrance

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Alphons Lhotsky

The full significance of Alphons Lhotsky's death on June 21, 1968, has only gradually become evident. Since none of his writings were ever translated, Lhotsky was known outside Austria only by specialists. Moreover, until recently the full range, quality, and breadth of his work could be judged only by reading a compendium, but the appearance of his *Aufsätze und Vorträge*,¹ the first volume of which has just been published, will make fuller, and deserved, appreciation possible for the first time.

On the surface, Lhotsky's life was typical of that of a generation that had to endure the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy and all its consequences. Born on May 8, 1903, the son of an officer, he became accustomed early in life to military discipline and to the abstemious living that was characteristic of Austrian officials. This background and the deprivations of the interwar period, during the course of which he had to serve the state for a number of years as an unpaid volunteer, explain his devotion to duty and the astonishing capacity to work, which made possible his publication of so many significant studies in addition to his performance from 1946 until his death of his exhausting teaching activities at the University of Vienna.

During his youth Lhotsky, whose studies were influenced most significantly by Oswald Redlich, devoted himself to making an examination of Italian historiography during the late middle ages, but because of the poverty in Austria during the years following the war, none of his many works on this period were published. The publication in 1970 of a lecture he gave in 1933 on "Dante's Science of Politics and Historical Investigation" has only recently made clear the full extent of the resulting loss.

In order to make a living Lhotsky had to do research for

¹Alphons Lhotsky, *Aufsätze und Vorträge*, selected and edited by Hans Wagner and Heinrich Koller, Vol. I: *Europäisches Mittelalter. Das Land Österreich* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1970). Three other volumes will be brought out.

foreign scholars in the manuscript collection of the Austrian National Library. In doing so he became acquainted with what later was to be his central place of work and acquired an encyclopedic knowledge of medieval and ancient literature. In addition, he worked in the public instruction and photograph office of the federal ministry of education. Here he first became aware of a new method for research that was to become a determinant factor in his later work—the consulting of material sources as well as written sources. Moreover, his entrance into museum service strengthened his leanings towards historical research, and his work on the history of the court museums led to his first monumental work: his 3-volume *Festschrift zum 50jährigen Bestand des Kunsthistorischen Museums*, which was published between 1941 and 1945. Exhibited in the last two volumes, which deal with the history of the imperial collections, are all the qualities of the admirable man of learning: accurate knowledge of details, captivating style of writing, and mastery of difficult technical problems. At the same time, for the *Monumenta Germaniae historica*, Lhotsky began working on the edition of the *Chronica Austriae* by the Viennese University Professor Thomas Ebendorfer. Even for the specialist this constituted an incredibly difficult task: that of restoring a bad text and tracking down all prototypes. Happily, Lhotsky was still alive when the edition was published in 1967. Many new ideas grew out of the problems encountered in editing the chronicle, and they were treated in numerous articles and in a biography of Thomas Ebendorfer, which was published in 1957 as a separate volume of the *Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae historica*.

The *Quellenkunde zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte Österreichs*, which was published in 1963 and which in a certain sense was undoubtedly the crowning achievement of his career, grew out of his work on the Ebendorfer project and out of his constantly revised lectures at the Institute for Austrian Historical Research (Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung). The subject treated in the work is limited mainly to the area that constitutes the present-day Federal Republic, but included in the volume, in addition to the written sources, is a systematic treatment of all other possible sources for historical knowledge. No other country has such a basic and comprehensive account or such a useful tool for further research. Similarly significant is the smaller volume on *Öster-*

reichische Historiographie, published in 1962—a summary of the total output of the Austrian region from earliest times to the present, in which the author discusses the forms and the special qualities, both good and bad, of Austrian historical writing and research.

Lhotsky's other monographs and articles, on individual historians as well as on the most heterogeneous series of documents, are too numerous to discuss here. However, the nature and range of his works are indicated by the following: his lectures on Otto von Freising (1958-1959), which were first published in 1970; his edition of the *Cronica Romanorum* of Johannes von Viktring (1960)—a priceless example of Lhotsky's remarkable editorial talents—; the edition, in collaboration with Karl Pivec, of the *Viridarium imperatorum et regum*, whose author, Lhotsky discovered, was Dietrich von Niem (published in 1956 in *Monumenta Germaniae historica: Staatsschriften des späteren Mittelalters*, Vol. V); and the *Notizbuch Kaiser Friedrichs III* (1952).

Parallel with Lhotsky's writings on historiography were works on the history of libraries and scholarship in general. In this field, the reader's attention is called particularly to Lhotsky's 1951 essay entitled "Zur Frühgeschichte der Wiener Hofbibliothek," which contains basic material on the translations into Latin and the national languages during the later middle ages, and to his *Umriss einer Geschichte der Wissenschaftspflege im alten Niederösterreich* (1964) and his *Geschichte der Wiener Artistenfakultät 1365 bis 1487* (1965), each of which was published separately. All three are based on the author's thorough knowledge of manuscripts and his familiarity with the authors of writings in the liberal arts, and in them Lhotsky has given convincing proof of the great accomplishments of Vienna and Lower Austria in cultivating all fields of scholarship. In another work, his *Geschichte des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, published in 1954 on the centennial of the founding of that institute, Lhotsky expressed his gratitude to that institution for its assistance and encouragement in his research.

Interests, inclinations, and personalities of the individual rulers were interestingly presented in Lhotsky's *Geschichte der Sammlungen*. And similar emphasis on the personal characteristics of monarchs appears in numerous articles on such individual monarchs as Rudolph I, Frederick III, Maximilian

I, Charles VI, and Emperor Francis II. Prominent among these articles were his fine "Gedenkrede auf Herzog Rudolf IV" written for the six-hundredth anniversary celebration of the founding of the University of Vienna in 1965 and his sketch of "Kaiser Friedrich III. Sein Leben und seine Persönlichkeit" appearing in the catalog of the Wiener Neustadt memorial exhibition of 1966. In numerous similar catalogs Lhotsky described the cultural situations of particular eras with remarkable expertise and in a manner intelligible to interested laymen. A basic article entitled "Apis-Colonna," written in 1944, was devoted to the House of Habsburg. In it Lhotsky examined the late medieval legends about the origins of the house and their political and ideological consequences. In his *Was heißt Haus Österreich?* (1956), he discussed the historical development of an idea—an idea which inspired the first collective name for the lands united under Habsburg rule during the later middle ages.

It was precisely because of his personal experiences at the time of the dissolution of the monarchy and during the period of National Socialist rule that Lhotsky devoted himself to studying with such energy and affection the land of Austria and the continuity of the union of the Danubian and Alpine lands from the time of ancient Noricum. The aim of many of his studies was to depict the characteristics and independence of Austria without engaging in false glorification or anticipating later developments in an unhistorical way. Fulfilling this goal particularly well is the short work entitled *Privilegium Maius. Die Geschichte einer Urkunde* (1957), in which he investigated the so-called "Austrian freedom letters" which were forged in the chancellery of Rudolph IV. In this work, the author shows how very much these forgeries were a product of the era in which they were written and points out that they were interpreted differently during the years that followed. Finally, he shows how the ultra-German nationalists, who rejected the concept—constantly emphasized by Lhotsky—of a special Austrian character and individuality, nevertheless used it as a weapon against Austria. The same thesis also appeared in his lecture "Ostarrîchi," delivered in 1947 at the beginning of the new period of Austrian independence.

Lhotsky's interest in examining the special characteristics and independent development of Austria also explains his interest in the era of transition following the death of Em-

peror Maximilian I. Then the unity of the Habsburg territories, which at that time were almost exactly the same as those of the present-day Federal Republic, threatened to crumble to pieces as a consequence of Charles V's first division of territory with his brother Ferdinand I at Worms, for the union of the Austrian lands with Bohemia and Hungary was "in the long run untenable." Lhotsky completed a comprehensive work on this period in 1956, which complemented Wilhelm Bauer's well-known study of the early years of Ferdinand by focusing on the individual Austrian lands rather than on the person of the young monarch. It is one of the manuscripts in Lhotsky's literary bequest that will be published in the near future.

Lhotsky's last great work, a *Geschichte Österreichs*, a revision of Alfons Huber's old handbook, remains unfinished. Of the three originally-planned volumes covering the period between 1281 and 1439, only the first, which deals with political history between 1281 and 1358, was published. Lhotsky's untimely death, shortly after his sixty-fifth birthday, interrupted the narrative which was to cover the period until the death of Albrecht V, and left unwritten the third volume, which was to deal with the "civilizing" economic and cultural accomplishments of the Austrian lands—a subject which he, better than anyone else, was equipped to deal with. The manuscript of the only completed volume was, according to the author's own statement, prematurely "extorted" from him, and consequently not given the thorough revising given his other works. After the completion of so many significant research projects, the man of learning thus was denied the pleasure of proceeding to the panoramic summaries and surveys in which his brilliant art of description would have been so effective.

In addition to Lhotsky's accomplishments as a researcher were those as a teacher. For more than twenty years he trained and influenced many students at the University of Vienna and at the Institute for Austrian Historical Research. The distinguished scholar demanded a great deal from them, sometimes forgetting that they knew less than he, but he gave them much more in return, for the results of his tireless research work were detectable in every sentence of his lectures. Moreover, he made the past completely alive. He was solicitous of the welfare not only of prospective scholars, archivists, and museum officials but also of that of secondary school

teachers—a concern which was demonstrated by the way he constantly promoted the Workers' Circle for Austrian History (Arbeitskreis für österreichische Geschichte) at the Institute for Austrian Studies, of which he was the chairman for many years. After the experiences of the recent past, when Austrian youths were under the malign influence of German-nationalist and anti-Austrian pedagogues, the training of teachers was especially important to him.

Alphons Lhotsky, the man of learning, the scholar, the teacher, and the lecturer, will long be remembered as the kind-hearted and unassuming man who may have burned himself out prematurely in his unswerving devotion to duty. First place must doubtlessly be assigned to him in the long line of Austrian historical scholars, for, combining in his writing the history of art and of developments in intellectual and political history, he used his vast knowledge of details but never lost sight of the broader and more basic questions involving the approach to historical knowledge. Had he lived, Lhotsky undoubtedly would have accomplished much more; however, the body of work he left behind is so significant that one can hardly understand how a single person, who steadfastly insisted upon working alone, could have produced it. A clue may be found in Alphons Lhotsky's conception of the task of a learned man, expressed in his own maxim: "Scholarship is not the wasting of state money. Scholarship is self-restraint, loneliness, and service." He accomplished so much only because he was guided by such strict standards.

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Oskar Regele

It might be said that the life of Hofrat Engineer Dr. Oskar Regele typifies the kind of existence which fate has meted out to the Austrian people. Not only does it reflect the plight of the Austrians during the past sixty to seventy years, when, on account of world political breakdowns and upheavals, so many careers again and again were jolted out of accustomed courses, but it also illustrates the tenacity with which Austrians began anew and finally asserted themselves in spite of difficulties.

The son of an officer in the imperial and royal army, Regele was born at Pettau a. d. Drau on July 7, 1890. After