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Michael Gehler. *Studenten und Politik: Der Kampf um die Vorherrschaft an der Universität Innsbruck, 1918-1938* (Innsbrucker Forschungen für Zeitgeschichte, 6). Innsbruck: Haymon-Verlag, 1990. Pp. 591. Cloth 485 öS.

The drift of the University of Innsbruck toward National Socialism is the underlying theme of this exhaustive study. As with universities in the Weimar Republic, Nazism exercised a strong attraction on Innsbruck students considerably before it became the ruling political movement in Germany and Austria. On the other hand, Catholicism exerted another strong influence over many students, leading many to support the "Austro-fascist" corporate state of Dolfuß and Schuschnigg. It was chiefly these forces that struggled for the "primacy" mentioned in the book's subtitle.

Gehler concentrates heavily on the politics of students organized into various types of fraternities and associations, but he has also been able to make a considerable contribution to the social and economic history of Innsbruck students, with an impressive statistical appendix. The surprisingly high percentage of children of nobles and the upper middle class in the student body, combined with the widespread economic hardship they suffered in the interwar years, may help explain their virulent resentments displayed in nationalism, anti-Semitism, and various forms of fascism. Another factor may have been the high percentage of *reichsdeutsch* citizens in the student body, attracted by the relatively low costs of studying in Austria.

Gehler's principle conclusions include overturning the argument that anti-Semitism was not a serious issue in Innsbruck merely because there were so few Jews there (as compared to Vienna); especially the Burschenschaften kept this pot on the boil, even to the extent of slackening on two other standard emotional issues, the question of south Tyrol and German-Austrian unification. Although the "Catholic" and "national" camps of the student body were in Gehler's words "largely of one opinion in ideological-political principles" (432), they began to drift apart over means to their ends by the mid-1920s and to go down increasingly different paths beginning with the crisis years 1931-32. The *Cartellverband*, which had supported the "corporate state" of Schuschnigg, lost most influence with the annexation of Austria in 1938, but the illegal Nazi

student groups fared little better under the *Gleichschaltung* of the university from on high.

Given the nature of the author's sources and the noncooperation of some of the student corporations, one can regretfully understand that the non-incorporated students, the "minority" as Gehler calls them, do not receive much attention. To an outsider these "modern" students, who rejected the questionable tradition of dueling and *couleurs*, appear worthy of more study. For in the end the story of a battle between Nazis and Austrofascists for dominance at the university does not leave much room for admiration. Gehler's book has other limitations, and cannot be regarded as a university history as such; but one can admire the thoroughness with which he has assembled what information he did from the most diverse sources, including quite evocative photographs.