Unmasking and Prosecuting Traitors in Austria-Hungary

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262. Institutsseminar des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung
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The crime of treason (*Hochverrat*) was regularly investigated and prosecuted in the late Habsburg empire, not only during the 1848 revolutions and the First World War, but also in peacetime when there was relative domestic stability. This lecture explores why this was the case, and where the 'traitors' were most prevalent during the dualist era of the Habsburg Monarchy. It argues that the authorities' obsession with *Hochverräter* can be explained in terms of the evolving security threats to the regime; but it also reflected the mindset of those who governed different regions, as well as the character of the penal codes and legal structures, much of which was inherited from the neo-absolutist decade. The talk illustrates these points with official crime statistics from both Austria and Hungary. It also supplies some vivid case studies from Vienna and Croatia to show how treason law was manipulated for political ends with very harmful results. In short, this processing of traitors challenges our understanding of the late Habsburg empire as a *Rechtsstaat*.

Mark Cornwall is Professor of Modern European History at the University of Southampton. His books include *The Undermining of Austria-Hungary* (2000), *The Devil's Wall: The Nationalist Youth Mission of Heinz Rutha* (2012), and *Sarajevo 1914: Sparking the First World War* (2020). In 2017 he was a Visiting Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford, and in 2022 he was awarded the Palacký Medal by the Czech Academy of Sciences. He is writing a history of treason in the late Habsburg Monarchy for Oxford University Press.

Moderation: Peter Becker