

Fritz Keller

## Communist Movement in Austria, 1918-1945

Through the social explosion in Russia, the old Austro-Hungarian Monarchy - this curious hodgepodge of brutality and Fin de siècle - crumbled and broke up from sheer inertia. Out of the pieces, the German-speaking people tried to build a new state. The old ruling classes, however, had lost their entire economic and military power by defeat in the First World War. Therefore, the new state Deutsch-Österreich, whose future borders were unconceivable at that time, was projected by its founders as only a transitional stage on the way "home" into the relatively strong German Empire. When this project could not be realized, because the victorious powers of the First World War prohibited affiliation (Anschluß) in the Treaty of Versailles, there lived in this 84,000-square-kilometer area, this "state that nobody wanted", about 6.5 million people (39% engaged in agriculture, 32% in industrie, 16% in trade and traffic, and 13% in public and private services).<sup>1</sup>

When the Communist Party of (German<sup>2</sup>-)Austria (*Kommunistische Partei Deutsch-Österreichs*; KP[D]Ö) was founded on 3 November 1918, it was one of the first communist organizations outside the borders of Soviet Russia. Due to its early birth, the party occupied an exceptional position in international relations: in Vienna, the former capital of an Empire, many economic, political and cultural ties with the former Crown Lands remained in existence even after the breakdown of the Monarchy. It could therefore serve as an auxiliary center of the world revolutionary movement, as a turntable between Moscow, Berlin, Munich, Rome,<sup>3</sup> Budapest and the Balkan States. From 1920 on, the periodical *Kommunismus* (Communism) was published here as the Communist International's organ for the countries of south-eastern Europe. The leadership of the exiled Hungarian Communist Party directed the party's activities under the Horthy-regime from clandestine bureaus in the town at the Danube.<sup>4</sup> Antonio Gramsci, formerly a member of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, stayed in Vienna from 1923 to 1924. From here he organized the resistance in Mussolini's Italy.<sup>5</sup> Angelica Balabanov, the first secretary of the communist world party, also lived here - an indefatigable revolutionary even after her expulsion from the Comintern.<sup>6</sup> Also situated in Vienna for years were the underground headquarters of the Balkan Communist Federation (*Kommunistische Balkan-Föderation*) under the leadership of first, the Bulgarian Vasil Kolarov and, later, his compatriot Georgi Dimitrov.<sup>7</sup> It was supervised by the Soviet ambassador in Austria, Adolf Joffe.<sup>8</sup> Last but not least, the Austrian section was sometimes of importance to the "foreign policy" of the Communist International with regard to its negotiations with the International Working Union of Socialist Parties (*Internationale Arbeitsgemeinschaft Sozialistischer Parteien*), constituted in Vienna by twenty

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<sup>1</sup> For those not familiar with Austrian history, it may be helpful to read the book of G.E.R. Gedye, *Fallen Bastions (Als die Bastionen fielen)*, available in an English (London, 1939) and a German edition (Wien, 1981). As a next step, the study by Hans Hautmann and Rudolf Kropf, *Die österreichische Arbeiterbewegung vom Vormärz bis 1945* (Wien, 1974) can be recommended.

<sup>2</sup> In 1920 the party changed its name.

<sup>3</sup> About this aspect details can be found in the book of Renato Monteleone, *Il partito comunista Austriaco. Rapporti e corrispondenza con GLI Italiani nel primo dopoguerra* (Milano, 1972).

<sup>4</sup> See Rudi Dutschke, *Versuch, Lenin auf die Füße zu stellen* (Berlin, 1974), pp. 229-246.

<sup>5</sup> See Giuseppe Fiori, *Das Leben des Antoni Gramsci* (Berlin, 1979), pp. 152-158.

<sup>6</sup> See Victor Serge, *Erinnerungen eines Revolutionärs 1901-1941* (Hamburg, 1977), p. 210.

<sup>7</sup> For the activities of the Federation in Vienna see: Dobrin Mitshev, "Georgi Dimitrov und die österreichische Arbeiterbewegung" and Stephan Troebst, "Wien als Zentrum der makedonischen Emigration in den 20er Jahren", both in *Forschungsgespräch: Wien und die bulgarische revolutionäre Emigration 1924-1934*, 28 November 1978 (unpublished manuscripts, DÖW 8.809).

<sup>8</sup> Serge, *Revolutionär*, p. 206. Coming from China, Joffe was banished to Vienna because of his oppositional views.



socialist parties on 22 February 1921.<sup>9</sup> This International, popularly known as the "Vienna Union" or dubbed by its opponents the "Two-and-a-half International", made a proposal for a conference of all working-class organizations of the world, which was welcomed by the Communist International in the first flush of its enthusiasm for a united front (after an unproductive conference in Berlin, in 1922, this strange experiment in united front tactics was abandoned).

We may therefore differentiate two periods of the party's history: one, the period of some international relevance, which lasted through the mid-twenties; and the later years, when it functioned as a normal section of the Comintern. Another differentiation could be made by the degree of the party's significance in national politics. Only in two periods did it exert any mass influence: from 1918 to 1923, shortly after the breakdown of the Monarchy; and after the disastrous defeat of the social democratic uprising against the Austro-fascists in February 1934. A third criterion for differentiation could be the internal structure of the party, which changed essentially in 1924. In that year, a reorganization basing the party on factory cells was started, a Pol Bureau modelled after the statute of the Russian party was created, and on 16 November an extraordinary party conference was held, to ratify a new leadership around Johann Koplenig (1891-1968) and, later, Friedl Fürnberg (1902-1978). According to official party historiography, this so-called "bolshevich nucleus" ended factional fights and laid the foundation for a stronger and more vigorous party. But it is evident, that - as in most other sections of the Comintern - "bolshevization" simply meant adaptation and subordination to Stalin's orders, and that it led to an organizational decline.

Ultimately, the meaningful data for the development of the communist movement in Austria are those normally used by contemporary history: the periods of the First Republic (1918-1934), of Austro-fascism (1934-1938) and of the Nazi-regime (1938-1945). This periodization also documents the KPÖ as object, rather than subject, of Austrian history; furthermore, in each of these three historical stages the operating conditions for the whole working-class movement changed completely. One could also regard the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (July-August 1935) as a rupture, which altered the aims of politics. This coincides very closely with the transition of the party in Austria from legal to underground.

### 1. Historiography

In the interwar period historians paid no scholarly attention to the KPÖ. On its tenth anniversary the party published some memoirs of veterans;<sup>10</sup> after their expulsion trotskyist dissidents made their specific view of the factional fights known in a series of articles.<sup>11</sup> Some Social Democrats studied the party's history for political purposes, especially for anti-communist pamphlets.<sup>12</sup>

Even after 1945, it took a long time to end the academic neglect due to the social and political background of Austria's intellectual elite: shortly after the liberation by the Red Army the universities were purged, under the guise of "anti-fascist" slogans. Perversely, the humane disciplines were subsequently dominated by Austro-fascists, Monarchists and other conservatives (later, by ex-Nazis). In that atmosphere of forced right-wing conformity, not even social democratic professors dared to openly profess their convictions. It was symptomatic for Austrian academia that not one scholar of Sigmund Freud or one proponent of the philosophy

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<sup>9</sup> On this occasion the KPÖ published two brochures: *Die Helden der Wiener Konferenz* (Wien, 1921) with contributions by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky; H. Hubmayer [i.e. Hilde Wertheimer], *Das Schwarzgelbbuch der Sozialdemokratie* (Wien, 1921), a collection of documents shaming the Austro-Marxists.

<sup>10</sup> The collection "Aus der Vergangenheit der Partei", *Rote Fahne*, 4 November 1928.

<sup>11</sup> The summary by Kurt Landau has been reprinted: *Wesen und Geschichte des Anarcho-Kommunismus in Österreich. Abschließende Bemerkungen zu den Fraktionskämpfen in der KPÖ* (Wien, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Two of this tendentious accounts are noteworthy to be mentioned: *Proletarische Irrwege. Die Entwicklung der Kommunistischen Partei Österreichs* (Wien, 1932); *Feind im Rücken. Bilder aus der Geschichte der Kommunistischen Internationale* (Wien, 1932).



of rationalism<sup>13</sup> could acquire tenure in Vienna. In the following decade of cold war and "re-building" (Wiederaufbau), all academically acknowledged contemporary history was mainly coalition history (Koalitionsgeschichte):<sup>14</sup> an extension of the social and political system of the fifties into the past. For the exponents of coalition history, Communists were "public enemies" in the sense of Henrik Ibsen's famous play and therefore no rewarding object for serious research.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the narrow-minded members of the Historical Commission of the Central Committee of the KPÖ did their best to strengthen these prejudices: they published Austrian analogues of Josef Stalin's notorious "Short Course of History of CPSU", brought up-to-date according to political opportunity;<sup>16</sup> they filled the pages of the theoretical monthly *Weg und Ziel* (Road and Goal) with reports which completely ignored basic facts, well known even to themselves, and were full of oversimplifications and rigid schematizations.

The pervasive climate changed a little when the Russian occupying power, together with the other allies, left the country in 1955. In the following years of international thaw, the governmental system of coalition between Conservatives and Social Democrats slid into a crisis. For new ideological integration, attempts were made to propagate a new awareness of the existence of a separate Austrian nation. One of these attempts was the foundation of the Austrian Resistance Archive (*Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes*; DÖW) in 1963.<sup>17</sup> From then on all available documentation about resistance against fascism was collected and preserved and could be used without any restriction. Based on these materials, historians of the DÖW published extensive and well-commented document collections for five of the nine Austrian regions.<sup>18</sup> Several volumes about the Austrian emigration to Belgium, France, the United States and England<sup>19</sup> and two books of oral-history<sup>20</sup> were also edited by the DÖW. Quite a large part of these publications dealt with communist activities.

A next essential step for working on the history of the KPÖ was made by the scientific secretary of the DÖW, Herbert Steiner, who published a bibliography for the years 1918 to 1933,<sup>21</sup> based primarily on excerpts from the party's central organ *Rote Fahne* (Red Flag). Being a party-member himself, he did this in the sixties during a short period of thaw inside the KPÖ.

The international student revolt of 1968 initiated more than two decades of social democratic governments in Austria under chancellor Bruno Kreisky. His reforms in many aspects of social life brought about a widening of historical research as well: new institutes were founded in and beyond the universities, new chairs of history were established, curricula were revised. Marxism, open to criticism as well as self-examination along intellectual

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<sup>13</sup> For this reason, Ernst Topitsch once spoke of Austrian universities as "enclaves of Salazar's regime" in central Europe.

<sup>14</sup> The following remarks about the institutionalization of contemporary history in Austria are based on the article of Gerhard Botz, "Eine neue Welt, warum nicht eine neue Geschichte?", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften*, no. 1/1990, pp. 49-76 and no. 3/1990, pp. 67-86.

<sup>15</sup> A late but significant example of this method is Rolf Reventlow, *Zwischen Alliierten und Bolschewiken. Arbeiterräte in Österreich 1918 bis 1923* (Wien, 1969).

<sup>16</sup> The latest version - now edited by the Working Group for History - is *Die Kommunistische Partei Österreichs* (Wien, 1989).

<sup>17</sup> A similar project was started by the Austrian emigrant Felix Kreissler, who was professor at the University of Rouen/France. He began the publication of *Austriaca. Cahiers universitaires d'information sur Autriche*.

<sup>18</sup> DÖW (ed.), *Widerstand und Verfolgung in Wien* (Wien, 1975) and so on.

<sup>19</sup> DÖW (ed.), *Österreicher im Exil. Belgien* (Wien, 1987) and so on.

<sup>20</sup> DÖW (ed.), *Erzählte Geschichte. Berichte von Widerstandskämpfern und Verfolgten* (Wien, 1989); *Spurensuche. Erzählte Geschichte der Kärntner Slowenen* (Wien, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> Herbert Steiner, *Die Kommunistische Partei Österreichs von 1918-1933* (Wien-Meisenheim, 1968).



lines, became respectable in Austrian academia. For new approaches to working-class history and especially the history of the KPÖ, the nomination of Karl R. Stadler, returned from his English emigration, to the new University in Linz (Upper Austria) was of extraordinary importance. Having belonged to an opposition group in the KPÖ before he joined the Social Democrats, he was the first historian who drew attention to the persecutions of exiled members of the social democratic Republican Defense Corps (*Schutzbund*) during the great purges in the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, under his mentorship a series of studies of young researchers about aspects of the history of the KPÖ was published. The methods were, to be sure, still dominated by *Historismus* and the history of events. Worth special mention are:

\* the standard work about the early years of the party;<sup>23</sup>

\* a comprehensive description of factional fights within the KPÖ from 1919 to 1945, written from a Trotskyist viewpoint,<sup>24</sup> with a large appendix of essential programmatic documents, demonstrating their falsification in reprints after 1945;<sup>25</sup>

\* a voluminous work about the Austrian dissident Communist Kurt Landau (1903-1937), who was assassinated by the Stalinists during the Spanish civil war,<sup>26</sup> which is more of a study about factional fights, the last years of the Weimar Republic and the Spanish civil war than a biography.

Simultaneously, a young generation of Trotskyists, who had found their way from the student revolt to the rank and file of the Fourth International, delved into the roots of their tendency.<sup>27</sup> A similar effort was made by non-German authors.<sup>28</sup>

The autobiography of the dissident Communist Ernst Fischer<sup>29</sup> started a wave of biographies and memoirs by expelled Euro-Communists. The widow of the perennial KPÖ chairman Johann Koplenig, Hilde, wrote a biography of her husband,<sup>30</sup> in which she corrected the official commemoration-book.<sup>31</sup> The memoirs of Leopold Grünwald (1901- )<sup>32</sup> and Josef Meisel (1911- )<sup>33</sup> also contain valuable information for researchers.

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<sup>22</sup> Karl R. Stadler, *Opfer verlorener Zeiten. Geschichte der Schutzbund-Emigration 1934* (Wien, 1974).

<sup>23</sup> Hans Hautmann, *Die verlorene Räterepublik. Am Beispiel der KPDÖ* (Wien, 1971).

<sup>24</sup> Fritz Keller, *Gegen den Strom. Fraktionskämpfe in der KPÖ 1919, Trotzlisten und andere Gruppen 1919-1945* (Wien, 1978).

<sup>25</sup> For example in Johann Koplenig, *Reden und Aufsätze 1924-1950* (Wien, 1950).

<sup>26</sup> Hans Schafranek, *Das kurze Leben des Kurt Landau. Ein österreichischer Kommunist als Opfer der stalinistischen Geheimpolizei* (Wien, 1988).

<sup>27</sup> For a general survey of the various opposition groups, their ideological differences and development see the dissertation (in political sciences) of Winfried Wagner, "Trotzkismus in Österreich" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universität Salzburg, 1976).

<sup>28</sup> "Dossier: Le mouvement trotskyste en Autriche", *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*, no. 5 (January-March 1980); Raimund Löw, "Autriche", *Quatrième Internationale*, no. 13 (1974); "Bibliographie des Documentes R.K.-C.R. Ultra Gauche", *Les Cahiers du CERMTRI* (Paris, n.d.).

<sup>29</sup> Ernst Fischer, *Erinnerungen und Reflexionen* (Reinbek, 1969); shortened English version: *An Opposing Man* (London, 1974).

<sup>30</sup> Hilde Koplenig, "Johann Koplenig" (unpublished manuscript, DÖW 16.086).

<sup>31</sup> Erwin Zucker-Schilling, *Er diente seiner Klasse. Johann Koplenig 1891-1968* (Wien, 1971).

<sup>32</sup> Leopold Grünwald, *Ein Altkommunist gibt zu Protokoll* (Wien, 1980). The unpublished long version, consisting of five volumes, is archived in DÖW (Exil 21.007).



A biography by the present author (with some autobiographic parts), which tells the tragic life of Karl Fischer (1918-1963), a symbolic figure of Austrian Trotskyism who spent thirteen years in the jails and concentration camps of Schuschnigg, Pétain, Hitler and Stalin,<sup>34</sup> follows the academic trend away from the methods of *Historismus* in the direction of individual experiences and the integration of issues taken from social history.

The latest impulses for research have again come from outside Austria: in the wake of the glasnost in the Soviet Union, Lilly Jergitsch (1904-1988),<sup>35</sup> who lived for many years in Russia, and the Stalin victim Rosa Puhm (1909- )<sup>36</sup> have written their memoirs. A few scientific studies have also been published about Austrians involved in the great purges.<sup>37</sup> If one critically examines this review of studies on the history of the KPÖ, there is no reason to be satisfied. On the contrary, success has been more apparent than real; more questions have been opened than answered:

\* Apart from the important role of the KPÖ delegate in the discussions about founding the Communist International,<sup>38</sup> next to nothing is known about the party's role as an international turntable. These gaps are surprising, because many (not ordered) police-dossiers held by the Austrian State Archive (*Österreichisches Staatsarchiv*) have information not only about subversive communist activities in Austria (*Kommunistische Umtriebe in Österreich*), but also about the clandestine functioning of the Balkan Communist Federation. (The first president of the Vienna police Johann Schober, who later became chancellor of the Republic, favored the cooperation of the Austrian police with the former Crown Lands; he played an exceptional role in establishing international relations between security services,<sup>39</sup> which held not only criminal but also political matters under observation.) \* A similar situation exists in regard to the internal structure of the KPÖ and its organizational connections with the Third International<sup>40</sup> - even though the so-called "Frey-Archiv", the well-ordered papers left by a former member of the central committee containing, for example, stenographic protocols of many sessions of the central leadership, were deposited in the DÖW years ago.<sup>41</sup> Not known are all the details concerning the methods and extent of financial support from the Moscow centre, which led the party from destitution to the ownership of an economic empire with an annual turnover in the neighbourhood of a thousand

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<sup>33</sup> Josef Meisel, "Jetzt haben wir Ihnen, Meisel!" *Kampf, Widerstand und Verfolgung eines österreichischen Antifaschisten (1911-1945)* (Wien, 1985).

<sup>34</sup> Fritz Keller, *In den Gulag von Ost und West. Karl Fischer, Arbeiter und Revolutionär* (Frankfurt, 1980).

<sup>35</sup> Lilly Beer-Jergitsch, "18 Jahre in der UdSSR" (unpublished manuscript, DÖW 8.834).

<sup>36</sup> Rosa Puhm, *Eine Trennung in Gorki* (Wien, 1990).

<sup>37</sup> The exact scale has been documented by Hans Schafranek through his study "405 Kurzbiographien österreichischer Stalin-Opfer (1933-1939)", in Hans Schafranek (ed.), *Die Betrogenen. Österreicher als Opfer des stalinistischen Terrors in der Sowjetunion* (Wien, 1991), pp. 161-244. See also Barry McLoughlin and Walter Szevera, *Posthum rehabilitiert* (Wien, 1991) and Memorial (ed.), *Österreichische Stalin-Opfer* (Wien, 1990).

<sup>38</sup> See Karl Steinhardt, "Der österreichische Antrag", in *Lenin und die Internationale: Erinnerungen von Zeitgenossen* (Berlin, 1983), p. 70. Also existing are unpublished "Erinnerungen" in the private collection of Herbert Steiner.

<sup>39</sup> He took the initiative for the First International Police-Congress in Vienna 1923.

<sup>40</sup> Material about Austrians, working in the so-called "Fourth Section" of the Comintern - a sort of secret service - can be found in Alain Brossat, *Agents de Moscou. Le stalinisme et son ombre* (Paris, 1988), pp. 57-83.

<sup>41</sup> Schafranek gives an index of some parts in *Kurt Landau*, pp. 565-568.



million dollars.<sup>42</sup>

\* No studies were ever made of the (changing) social composition of the membership, or of the KPÖ's influence among various sections of the population, for instance youth,<sup>43</sup> children,<sup>44</sup> the unemployed<sup>45</sup> or farmers.<sup>46</sup>

\* Very little is known about the party's work in the Trade Unions - the voluminous standard work about the Austrian union movement contains, under the catchword Red Trade Union Opposition (*Rote Gewerkschafts-Opposition*; RGO), only a few references to the Red International of Trade Unions (Profintern) in Moscow.<sup>47</sup>

\* Only a few historians researching regional themes have taken notice of the KPÖ.<sup>48</sup>

\* A brochure, published by the Frauenreferat der KPÖ,<sup>49</sup> which contains stimulating contributions about the "red grandmothers" Anna Grün (1889-1962), Anna Hornik-Ströhmer (1890-1966) and Malke Schorr (1885-1961), is, aside from a few programmatic documents,<sup>50</sup> the only available literature about the KPÖ's women's section and the Red Help.

\* Systematic studies about the cultural work of the party are not available.

\* Neither does a biographic lexicon of the Austrian Communists exist. Data on some of the party's more prominent figures can be found in the only existing lexicon about the whole Austrian labour movement.<sup>51</sup>

What are the reasons for these gaps? Why - after a short boom in the seventies - were fewer and fewer historians interested in the subject? The reference to - still existing - anti-communist resentments in the academic world alone is not a satisfactory answer. It may help to consider E.H. Carr's dictum that history, and especially contemporary history, is "a dialogue between the events in the past and progressively emerging future ends".<sup>52</sup> What are the "emerging future ends" of the KPÖ, which for decades linked its fate absolutely with that of the

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<sup>42</sup> See "Die Geschäfte der KPÖ. Warum der kommunistische Zehn-Milliarden-Treuhandkonzern seine Erfinder überleben wird", *Wochenpresse*, no. 13, 28 March 1991.

<sup>43</sup> The only comprehensive attempt - Historische Kommission der KPÖ (ed.), *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Kommunistischen Jugendbewegung in Österreich* (Wien, 1981) - is, besides its lack of objectivity, totally useless in the searching for sociological facts and figures.

<sup>44</sup> Starting in 1921, the KPÖ published a children's newspaper *Der junge Genosse* (The Young Comrade).

<sup>45</sup> Peter Wilding gives some remarks in "...für Arbeit und Brot". *Arbeitslose in Bewegung* (Wien, 1990). But this study is concentrated on an exceptional regional case in Styria, where the Trotskyists were still stronger than the KPÖ and therefore dominated the work among the unemployed.

<sup>46</sup> In his biography of Laurenz Genner (1894-1962), a social democratic deputy, who joined the KPÖ in 1938 and is author of the programmatic text *Der Bauer im demokratischen Österreich* (Wien, 1945), his son Michael outlines the KPÖ-principles for work among farmers: *Mein Vater Laurenz Genner. Ein Sozialist im Dorf* (Wien, 1979).

<sup>47</sup> Fritz Klenner, *Die österreichischen Gewerkschaften*, 2 vols. (Wien, 1953), 2, pp. 1081-1088.

<sup>48</sup> Only two exceptions came to mind: The commemorative volume for Peter Kammerstätter - Hubert Hummer and Reinhard Kannonier (eds.), *Die Pflicht zum Widerstand* (Wien, 1986) - for Upper Austria and Gerhard Oberkofler, *Die Tiroler Arbeiterbewegung* (Wien, 1986).

<sup>49</sup> Frauenreferat der KPÖ (ed.), *Frauen in der KPÖ. Gespräche und Porträts* (Wien, 1989).

<sup>50</sup> Like the brochure *Was wir den arbeitenden Frauen zu sagen haben* (Wien, 1921), edited shortly after the first Women's Conference (Frauenreichskonferenz) of the KPÖ.

<sup>51</sup> George Haupt and Jean Maitron (eds.), *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier international. L'Autriche* (Paris, 1971).

<sup>52</sup> E.H. Carr, *What is history?* (Harmondworth, 1976), p. 123.



Soviet Union and which at present plays hardly any role in Austrian society? Why should anybody be interested in the history of a tiny sect, whose great future lies behind it and whose archives are even now inaccessible for research, held closely confined by the authorities even for historians of the KPÖ?<sup>53</sup>

## 2. Foundation

During the total collapse of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy in the years 1918-19 (industrial production fell below 50% and agricultural production below 40% of the pre-war-level), the sceptre of the last Emperor, Karl, lay in the streets of Vienna. Who would pick it up? The soldiers, returning from the trenches, disordered and with weapons in hand? The war-disabled and unemployed? The workers in the factories, where the machines were standing still? The wives, who wondered how to feed their children the next day? During mass peace strikes in the large industrial centres of Lower Austria in January 1918 and during mutinies, the malcontents had spontaneously formed Soviets. These organs of self-organization aimed at radical changes in politics. Never again would working men and women be cannon-fodder for the interests of the upper ten-thousand. The Soviets were dominated by the Social Democrats, who, having done all they could behind the scene to prevent strikes<sup>54</sup> and the disintegration of the army,<sup>55</sup> were able to tame the revolutionary tide. Still, a burst in this dam was possible at any moment.

The real hour of birth of the communist movement in Austria was during the great "January" strike (Jänner-Streik).<sup>56</sup> The so-called Ultra-lefts, who stood in opposition to the war politics of the Social Democrats and were in contact with the "Zimmerwald" movement, had built up a network of like-minded workers in the armament plants of Lower Austria from 1916 on. In a leaflet, under the heading "Betrayed and Sold!" ("*Verraten und verkauft!*"), they called for "a new organization for contest and liberation". Police arrested nearly all the leaders of this group. It was therefore more than half a year later that a small intellectual circle around Elfriede Friedländer (1895-1961) (she headed the German Communist Party [*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*; KPD] from 1924 until 1926 under the name Ruth Fischer) founded the KPDÖ. At first the party remained almost completely isolated. All the prominent Social Democrats, including Friedrich Adler, who was very popular among the masses (because he had shot prime minister Karl Stürgkh in protest against the war politics of the party led by his father Victor), refused to enter the communist group. The KPDÖ could not even integrate all the supporters of the "Zimmerwald" movement in Austria. Some refused for tactical reasons: the group around Franz Koritschoner (1892-1941) wanted to continue to work within the framework of the Social Democratic Workers-Party (*Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei*; SDAP). Others - the followers of the Federation of Revolutionary Socialists "International" (*Föderation revolutionärer Sozialisten "Internationale"*) - refused because of their anarchist organizational principles.<sup>57</sup>

The roots of this evident weakness of the communist movement can be found in the specific political

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<sup>53</sup> No index of the documents held in the party-archives has ever been published. A large part of the materials seems to be unordered. The right to use them is reduced by "ad usum Delphini" and sometimes refused even to historians of the KPÖ (for details see Winfried R. Garscha, "Die Parteigeschichte neu schreiben - aber wie?", *Weg und Ziel*, no. 4 (April 1991), pp. 202-204, even though he tries to defend the party's censorship).

<sup>54</sup> Evidence for this can be found in the archives of the Austrian government and police; see Roman Rosdolsky, "Die revolutionäre Situation in Österreich im Jahr 1918 und die Politik der Sozialdemokraten", in Roman Rosdolsky, *Studien über revolutionäre Taktik. Zwei unveröffentlichte Arbeiten über die II. Internationale und die österreichische Sozialdemokratie*, (Berlin West, 1973), pp. 121-174.

<sup>55</sup> See the detailed information given by Julius Braunthal about the conduct of the social democratic leadership during the mutiny of the sailors of Cattaro in *Auf der Suche nach dem Millennium* (Wien, 1964), pp. 202-204.

<sup>56</sup> For the origins and development of this strike movement, see Hans Hautmann, *Geschichte der Rätebewegung in Österreich 1918-1924* (Wien, etc., 1987), pp. 153-171.

<sup>57</sup> About the conception of Soviets propagandized by the Federation, see *ibid.*, pp. 630-634.



culture of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: "In old Austria all parties liked compromises, even if they acted intransigently and sometimes attacked each other. That phenomenon can be explained by the insecurity and confusion of all Austrian standards. You never knew if the enemy of today might not be your ally tomorrow. Therefore, it was a common principle never to demolish bridges which could lead you into the other camp. Everybody was sometimes useful, and therefore nobody should be driven away totally".<sup>58</sup>

This political culture together with a powerless parliament (all governments ruled the country by emergency decrees) prevented the development of clearly divergent factions within the SDAP.<sup>59</sup> Thus, only Engelbert Pernerstorfer openly followed the revisionist theories of Eduard Bernstein and, likewise, only Josef Strasser (1870-1935), in Reichenberg in the Sudeten-region, declared himself a lonely supporter of Rosa Luxemburg and Anton Pannekoek. The overwhelming majority of the Social Democrats in Austria were champions in tactical maneuvering and conflict suppression. So a myth of party unity was kept up, as expressed in the centrist slogan: "It's better to go the wrong way together, than to walk the right way alone!"

### 3. Struggle for Soviet-Democracy in the Republic (1918-1934)

Nevertheless, in the first period after its foundation the Communist Party did expand. On 7 December 1918 the group around Franz Koritschoner<sup>60</sup> consolidated with the circle of Elfriede Friedländer. Some time later, the members of the Federation of Revolutionary Socialists "International" entered the organization. Most of the participants were half-hearted in this unification.<sup>61</sup> Old political differences still separated them. So the internal regime of the KPDÖ was characterized by turbulent factional fights and backstair politics. And the rapid rise of membership in a relatively short period (in March 1919 3,000 members, only one month later about 10,000 and again a month later, between 30,000 and 40,000 members<sup>62</sup>) sharpened the conflicts, especially because the newcomers were mostly either "Lumpenproletariat" or bohemian people, that is, politically inexperienced and sometimes of the adventurous sort.

The party published a newspaper, first called *Weckruf* (Reveille), then *Soziale Revolution* (Social Revolution) and finally *Rote Fahne*. There was also a special bulletin for the communist delegates in the workers councils called *Räte-Korrespondenz* (Soviet-Correspondence). For the soldiers, especially those of the "Volkswehrbataillon 41" - better known as Red Guard (Rote Garde), because it sometimes functioned as KPDÖ-guard - *Der Rote Soldat* (Red Soldier) was published.

The above-mentioned growth of the party must be seen against the background of a high revolutionary tide that had reached its top in 1919. In March the Hungarian Communists proclaimed a Soviet Republic. Munich followed. And from this point on, Austria was wedged in between two revolutionary governments. The conclusion for the Austrian Communists was clear: like the comrades in Petrograd, Budapest and Munich, it was now their duty to seize power. In their opinion, Austria was the next milestone in the process of world revolution. Therefore, the KPDÖ mobilized and demonstrated nearly every day. June 15, 1919 was to be the D-day for insurrection. The aim of the military project was clear: "The counterrevolutionary government must be driven

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<sup>58</sup> Josef Strasser, "Die Musterpartei der internationalen Sozialdemokratie", in Josef Strasser, *Der Arbeiter und die Nation. Anhang: Schriften zum Austromarxismus* (Wien, 1982), p. 87.

<sup>59</sup> The factor of the "powerlessness of the parliament" was stressed in a letter of Karl Kautsky to the Austrian Social Democrats ("Ein Brief", *Der Kampf*, no. 1/1907, pp. 9-11).

<sup>60</sup> He formulated the first programmatic declaration of the KPDÖ: *Was will die Kommunistische Partei?* (Wien, 1919).

<sup>61</sup> Only one example should give an impression of the level of the controversies: an article against the first party chairwoman Elfriede Friedländer ended with the words: "You have to ask yourself in which part of the world she recently walked the streets". Johannes Wertheim, "Die österreichische Bettelheimerei", *Kommunismus*, no. 21-22, 15 June 1921, p. 733.

<sup>62</sup> Figures given by Hautmann, *KPDÖ*, p. 123.



out, and the Communist Party must proclaim its dictatorship on behalf of the proletariat".<sup>63</sup>

The Social Democrats, well informed about the operation (some Communists in the Red Guard had openly sabotaged the preparations), started a great propaganda offensive at the conference of the Vienna Workers Council (Wiener Kreis-Arbeiterrat), two days before D-day. We already have Soviets in Austria, they argued, exactly the institution which the communist would like to bring to power. Therefore all working-class parties should follow the decisions of their Soviet representatives, especially in the question of proclaiming a soviet republic.<sup>64</sup>

After these political controversies, a period of repression began. On 14 June 1919, 122 persons, including the leaders of the KPDÖ, were arrested by the police under the allegation that they were plotting to overthrow the government. The next day, the mass of the party members and sympathizers demonstrated for their release. The police answered with gunshots. Dead and wounded people were the only result.

Now the Communist International also criticized and publicly rebuked the adventurous tactics of its Austrian section. First the article "It's a long way to Tipperary!" appeared, written by Karl Radek, under the code-name Arnold Struthahn.<sup>65</sup> Then V.I. Lenin himself supported this view.<sup>66</sup> Finally the Executive Committee of the world party published an "Open Letter".<sup>67</sup>

The first sign of a change of tactics was the participation of the KPDÖ in the parliamentary elections; up to now they had rejected "bourgeois democracy". The results were disastrous: with only 27,000 votes, not even one of the 160 seats was won for the party. At this time 42 % of the electorate voted for the Christian Social Party (*Christlichsoziale Partei*), 36% voted for the SDAP, and the rest of the electorate voted for Pan-German candidates. The success of the new moderate behaviour within the Soviets was greater. Contrary to the policy of the SDAP-leaders,<sup>68</sup> about 100 of the 300 delegates to the Vienna Workers Council supported the Social Democratic Association of Revolutionary Soviet-Delegates (*Sozialdemokratische Arbeitsgemeinschaft revolutionärer Arbeiter-Räte*), which opposed the coalition pact of the Social Democrats with the Christian Social Party.<sup>69</sup> But once again the myth of party unity within the SDAP became effective: on 10 June 1920 the Austro-Marxists left the government to avoid a schism.

This manoeuvre was very effective. Only a small part of the Social Democratic Association under the leadership of Josef Frey (1892-1947), chairman of the Vienna Soldiers Soviet (*Wiener Soldaten-Rat*), left the SDAP in November 1920 to join the Communist Party soon afterwards. The majority (including the popular Otto Leichter and Käthe Pick-Leichter) stayed within the social democratic ranks.

Josef Frey was a convinced follower of the united front tactic, which then was promoted by the Communist International. He therefore advanced quickly to the central leadership of the Austrian section. Notwithstanding the delaying opposition of the very influential ultra-left factions, he started to reorganize the party. In the summer of 1921, his project had progressed to such an extent, that a communist initiative for a solidarity campaign for hunger victims in the Wolga-region was supported in the Vienna Workers Council by the prominent Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer; 50 million crowns altogether were collected from Social Democrats as well as Communists - the highest sum of all capitalist countries. In the spring of 1922, the Vienna Workers

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<sup>63</sup> Ernst Bettelheim, "Die Bettelheimerei", *Kommunismus*, no. 29-32, 1921.

<sup>64</sup> For details of the divergences, see Hautmann, *Rätebewegung*, pp. 332-336.

<sup>65</sup> Arnold Struthahn [i.e. Karl Radek], "Die Krise der deutsch-österreichischen Partei", *Rote Fahne*, 28, 29, and 30 October 1919.

<sup>66</sup> W.I. Lenin, "Offener Brief an die österreichischen Kommunisten", *Rote Fahne*, 19 August 1920 (*Werke*, vol. 31 [Berlin, 1978], pp. 256ss.). Leo Lania describes the resonance in the KPDÖ in *Welt im Umbruch* (Frankfurt/M., etc., n.d.), p. 179.

<sup>67</sup> "An den Vorstand und die Mitglieder der KPDÖ", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, no. 13/1920, pp. 296ss.

<sup>68</sup> Otto Bauer, "Die alte und die neue Linke", *Der Kampf*, no. 7, July 1920, pp. 250-253.

<sup>69</sup> The program of the Association was outlined by Josef Benisch, "Die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft revolutionärer Arbeiterräte", *Der Kampf*, no. 36, November 1919, pp. 798-800.



Council took up a communist initiative to organize a protest meeting of the SDAP and KPÖ against the worsening living conditions of workers. One hundred ten thousand responded to the joint call. In the summer, the KPÖ intervened successfully with its revolutionary blocks (*Revolutionäre Blöcke*) within the social democratic Free Trade Unions in strike movements of the railway workers, postal employees, Vienna tram drivers and workers in the print branch.<sup>70</sup> In autumn, Communists alone were able to organize about 30,000 in a march through Vienna against the Treaty of Geneva.

Through the Treaty of Geneva, Austria received a large public loan from the League of Nations for the reconstruction of the economy. In effect, the galloping inflation was brought under control. But unemployment was growing (until the crisis of the world economy in 1929, the unemployment figures in Austria were, three or four times higher than in Germany) and industrial production never reached the pre-war level. The price paid for recovery was high. The entire property of the state as well as many private enterprises came under the tutelage of the League of Nations. The commissioner of the creditors even had the right to correct the annual budget. So when Otto Bauer, the prominent Social Democrat, accused the Austrian government under the leadership of the christian-social chancellor Ignaz Seipel that they had committed "national treason", it was no exaggeration.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, the "Seipel reconstruction" established a more equal balance of power between Social Democracy and the Christian Social Party.

For the KPÖ, the relative economic and political stabilization produced, first of all, de-stabilization within the party. In March 1923 Josef Frey lost his majority in the Central Committee. This was the starting signal for factional fights, of a ferocity rarely experienced before or afterwards in any other section of the Communist International. "To Austrianize" became a catch phrase in contradiction to "to bolshevize".<sup>72</sup> The following chronology of the splits and expulsions can only give a vague impression of what really happened:

\* In 1924 a small group of sympathizers of the anarcho-sindicalist Communist Workers International (*Kommunistische Arbeiter-Internationale*) left the party, later publishing the *Kommunistische Arbeiter-Zeitung* (Communist Workers Newspaper) for a short time.

\* In January 1927 the KPÖ expelled Josef Frey and his close followers. About 200 members left the organization with them and constituted an Austrian Communist Party-Opposition (*Kommunistische Partei Österreichs-Opposition*).<sup>73</sup> The new group published the by-weekly *Arbeiter-Stimme* (Workers Voice).<sup>74</sup> After heavy internal quarrels, a faction under the leadership of Kurt Landau split from the oppositionists in April 1928 and founded the Austrian Communist Opposition-Left Communists (*Kommunistische Opposition Österreichs - Linke Kommunisten*), publishing *Neuer Mahnruf* (New Call).

\* In 1929 followed the expulsion of the Austrian followers of Nikolai Bukharin, the so-called "right opposition". The leaders of this group, Gustav Schönfelder (1895-1991) and William Schlamm (1904-1978),<sup>75</sup> formed the Austrian Communist Opposition (*Kommunistische Opposition Österreichs*), which became a section of the International Union of Communist Organizations (*Internationale Vereinigung der kommunistischen*

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<sup>70</sup> See Keller, *Strom*, p. 24. At this time the revolutionary blocks in the Free Trade Unions had their own organization structure: executives in eight branches (Branchenexekutiven), with a trade council (Gewerkschaftsrat) as leading body publishing *Der Rote Gewerkschafter* (The Red Trade Unionist), connected with the KPÖ only over the party's national leadership.

<sup>71</sup> Otto Bauer, "Die Genfer Sanierung. Rede gehalten vor dem Parteitag der SDAP 1922", in Otto Bauer, *Eine Auswahl aus seinem Lebenswerk* (Wien, 1961), p. 288.

<sup>72</sup> *Protokoll des V. Weltkongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale*, 2 vols. (Erlangen, 1974), 2, p. 1037.

<sup>73</sup> After 1934 the group changed its name to Fighting League for the Liberation of the Working Class (*Kampfbund für die Befreiung der Arbeiterklasse*).

<sup>74</sup> A programmatic series of articles from this newspaper has been reprinted: Josef Frey, *Wie kämpfen gegen die Arbeitslosigkeit?* (Wien, 1985).

<sup>75</sup> He was, for some time after 1933, the editor of *Die neue Weltbühne* (founded by Carl von Ossietzky) in Prague. When he moved to the United States, he became ultra-conservative and an editorial executive of the Henry Luce publications.



*Organisationen*).

\* Soon afterwards a few Trotskyists around Isa Strasser (1891-1970), a very active organizer of the women's sector in the KPÖ,<sup>76</sup> were expelled.

After these purges of all "deviationists", the KPÖ got only 16,119 (1927) and 20,879 (1929) votes in nation-wide elections. According to the official figures of 1931, only 3,508 members were counted. A year later the KPÖ was said to have 6,813 male and female members<sup>77</sup> (the SDAP organized 653,605 people in 1931).

Observing the weakness and the sectarian wranglings, Leon Trotsky, in exile in Turkey, pronounced a harsh verdict on the entire communist movement in Austria: "The fact is that the Austrian Communist Party, which has done everything possible to help the Social Democracy, is dragging out a woeful existence in the backyards of the labor movement. All the maladies of the Communist International find their sharpest expression in the Austrian Communist Party. The opposition splinters of the Austrian party - without international ground under their feet, without an international method in their hands, without contact with the masses, with a narrow Austrian horizon before their eyes - very rapidly degenerated into unprincipled cliques".<sup>78</sup>

As a consequence of this development, the communist movement was to play only a marginal role in the fight of the Austrian workers against the two wings of fascism existing in the country: the Nazis, supported by Hitler's party in Germany, on the one hand, and the clerical Austro-fascists, linked with Mussolini-Italy and Gömbös-Hungary, on the other. This can be proven by the examples of two key moments: the street battle of 15 July 1927 and the desperate rebellion on 12 February 1934.

On 15 July 1927 the workers of Vienna, outraged by the acquittal of fascist murderers, marched to the centre. They carried banners protesting against the judgement, but were perfectly good-tempered. Suddenly there came a sound of firing from somewhere behind the parliament. It was the beginning of one of the most bloody twenty-four hours in the history of Vienna. The police killed eighty-five persons and wounded more than 100. As can be expected, the equanimity of the demonstrators vanished. Men armed with planks and iron bars rushed at the mounted and foot police and started hamstringing their horses with knives; other demonstrators set fire to the palace of justice...

The KPÖ was at first "surprised by the spontaneous force of the demonstration",<sup>79</sup> but then tried to influence the movement by slogans such as "General strike! Weapons!"<sup>80</sup> The lack of response that these slogans elicited did not prevent the Comintern from criticizing the Austrian section: the Communists should have called for not only a general strike and weapons for defense, but also for Soviets and insurrection.<sup>81</sup> To be armed better the next time, the small KPÖ founded a Workers Militia (*Arbeiterwehr*) on 11 December 1927.<sup>82</sup>

The first objective of the "christian social" policies in 1927 was to provoke the workers into conflict, which would then be labelled "a bolshevist revolt" and taken as an excuse for further anti-democratic illegalities - also with the help of clerical fascist guards (*Heimwehren*). Not surprisingly, the first victim was the KPÖ: the government ruled that the party must be dissolved. The new party leader Johann Kopleinig and other members

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<sup>76</sup> See Isa Strasser, *Arbeiterin und Gewerkschaft* (Berlin, 1924).

<sup>77</sup> Emil, "Das Wachstum der KP.Österreichs", *Inprekorr*, no. 32, 1932, p. 991.

<sup>78</sup> Leon Trotsky, "The Crisis of the German left Opposition", in Leon Trotsky, *Writings 1931-1932*, (New York, 1975), p. 148. See also "The Austrian Crisis and Communism", *Writings 1929* (New York, 1975), pp. 383-396.

<sup>79</sup> Winfried R. Garscha, "Die KOMINTERN und die Wiener Juliereignisse 1927", *Archiv 1987. Jahrbuch des Vereins für die Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* (Wien, 1987), p. 182.

<sup>80</sup> *Rote Fahne*, 15 July 1927 (special edition).

<sup>81</sup> See "Protokoll Nr. 102 der Sitzung des EKKI vom 16. September 1927", published partly by Winfried R. Garscha, "KOMINTERN", pp. 185-187. For the role the Austrian question played in the factional struggle of the RKP(B), see Josef Stalin, "Vereinigtes Plenum des ZK und der ZKK der KPdSU(B). 29.Juli bis 9. August 1927", in Josef Stalin, *Werke*, 11 vols. (Berlin, 1950), 11, p. 5.

<sup>82</sup> For details see Winfried R. Garscha and Barry McLoughlin, *Wien 1927. Menetekel für die Republik* (Wien, 1987), p. 280.



of the central bodies were accused of high treason. Police searches in party offices and confiscations of party literature became everyday occurrences. On 23 September 1931 the Communist Youth League (*Kommunistischer Jugendverband*; KJV<sup>83</sup>) was outlawed. On 26 May 1933 every activity of the KPÖ was prohibited by a government order. The *Rote Fahne* could be published under censorship until 22 July 1933.

Toward the end of its legal existence, the KPÖ had made great efforts to attract followers.<sup>84</sup> Programs "for social and national liberation",<sup>85</sup> for the unemployed,<sup>86</sup> for farmers,<sup>87</sup> for youth<sup>88</sup> and for women<sup>89</sup> were set up, a new theoretical paper *Der Kommunist* (The Communist) and periodicals for party activists were published,<sup>90</sup> and congresses and meetings were organized. The party intervened in a local miner strike in Lower Austria with a separate communist strike committee, which opposed against the Free Trade Union leadership. The RGO, the independent communist trade union organization which, by then, actually did not exist,<sup>91</sup> was to be rebuilt by these methods. The project ended unsuccessfully: the strike was called off, five communist shop stewards and eighty of their followers lost their jobs. Despite all these efforts, the KPÖ got only about 40,000 votes in a regional election on 24 April 1932. At the same time the Nazis could count as many as 201,365 supporters.

As mentioned before, the KPÖ, lacking support, could play only a marginal role in the anti-fascist fight. During the entire year after its prohibition, the *Rote Fahne* called for a "General Strike!" against the approaching dictatorship of the Austro-fascists. But only a few social democratic members listened to these appeals,<sup>92</sup> which were always combined with the declaration that, for a fight against the fascists to be victorious, first the "social-fascist" leadership had to be driven away.

After the elimination of parliament in March 1933, the prohibition of May-Day celebrations, and the outlawing of the social democratic Republican Defense Corps, the SDAP rank and file rejected the tactic of retreat of the SDAP leaders and, on 12 February 1934, began a desperate rebellion against the allied powers of police, military and Austro-fascist guards - the first armed uprising ever by a social democratic force. The communist members, together with the social democratic workers, defended the municipal dwellings of Red

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<sup>83</sup> The correct but never used name was Union of Proletarian Youth (*Verband der Proletarier-Jugend*).

<sup>84</sup> Social Democrats maintained (*Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 2 February 1930) that the KPÖ counted only 638 members in whole Vienna.

<sup>85</sup> *Wo ist der Ausweg? Programm für die soziale und nationale Befreiung der Werktätigen Österreichs* (Wien, 1931).

<sup>86</sup> *Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogramm der KPÖ* (Wien, 1930).

<sup>87</sup> *Das Land für die werktätigen Bauern. Bauernhilfsprogramm der KPÖ* (Wien, 1932).

<sup>88</sup> *Junger Arbeiter wohin?* (Wien, 1932).

<sup>89</sup> *Werktätige Frau, auf Dich kommt es an!* (Wien, 1932). Requested were a fundamental change in legislation about family, a four-month leave after every delivery, free abortion without any time limit. These demands were popularized in the newspaper *Rote Frauenpost*.

<sup>90</sup> *Der kommunistische Agitator* (The Communist Agitator) and *Der Partei-Kurier* (The Party Courier).

<sup>91</sup> See Oskar Großmann, "Die RGO Österreichs", *Inprekorr*, nos. 53, 1930, and 29, 1931. In Vienna only 21 factory cells with 119 (sic!) members existed at this time! Since "bolshevization", the KPÖ had lost factory cells nation-wide also. The figures are: 1925 - 66 cells (membership unknown), 1927 - 60 cells with 1,044 members, 1928 - 34 cells with 454 members. 1929 the only factory cell with more than 100 members reunified with Social Democracy. Keller, *Strom*, p. 72.

<sup>92</sup> The most informative account of the pre-1934 relations between oppositional SDAP-members and the KPÖ can be found in Anson Rabinovich, *The Crisis of Austrian Socialism. From Red Vienna to Civil War 1927-1934* (Chicago and London, 1983), pp. 160-163.



Vienna<sup>93</sup> behind hastily constructed street barricades. But the army used artillery, and after three days of bloodshed the unequal struggle was over.

#### 4. Against the Austro-Fascists (1934-1938)

The civil war of 12 February 1934 convinced many Social Democrats of the impossibility of changing society by peaceful democratic methods; it unmasked some of their leaders as traitors and cowards (the commander-in-chief of the Republican Defense Corps, Julius Deutsch, fled to Czechoslovakia, claiming to have been wounded). In the years after, the Austro-fascists could neither safeguard their position on the international scene nor atomize the working class, as the Nazis did in Germany.

Under these circumstances the communist influence grew, especially in organizations like the illegal Free Trade Unions (*Freie Gewerkschaften*) and the Republican Defense Corps that previously had been totally under social democratic control. It is no exaggeration to say that the KPÖ, through the influx of former SDAP-members, had become an underground mass-party: more than 10,000 members took part in clandestine meetings to prepare the twelfth party congress (September 1934) in Prague.

An important instrument for winning over Social Democrats was the solidarity work of the Workers' International Relief (*Internationale Arbeiter-Hilfe*), better known as "Red Help" (*Rote Hilfe*), which occupied itself with relief work for the victims of political persecution and their families. The "Red Help" brought 800 of those who had participated in the "12 February 1934" rebellion (together with their families a group of approximately 1,200 persons<sup>94</sup>) from camps in Czechoslovakia to the Soviet Union. In Moscow they were welcomed by demonstrations. Even at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (July-August 1935), a delegation of them were given a hero's welcome.<sup>95</sup> Shortly afterwards, however, they became victims of the "purges", sometimes even betrayed by their own "comrades".<sup>96</sup>

In later years, illegal militants were fleeing the repression of the Austro-fascists almost daily. From these refugees, a substantial number of the ca. 2,000 Austrian members of the International Brigades in the Spanish civil war were recruited.<sup>97</sup>

In its tactics, the KPÖ loyally followed the instructions given out by the Comintern. Shortly after the insurrection of 12 February 1934, the party set about putting the slogan "united front from below" into practice. In July 1934 the minimum demand of the illegal social democratic leaders (now calling themselves Revolutionary Socialists [*Revolutionäre Sozialisten*; RS], to accentuate their disassociation with the old Austro-Marxist party)<sup>98</sup> - non-aggression - was accepted by the Communists and an agreement for cooperation was concluded. After the Seventh Comintern Congress, the KPÖ tried to build first a popular front and then a national front. But the realization of these projects was very complicated in Austria for several reasons:

\* There was no liberal alliance partner.

\* The impossibility of a pact with bourgeois parties or individuals had long been demonstrated, and all militants remembered well the fatal results of Austro-Marxist tactics.

\* Neither the "old" Austro-Marxists in the emigration (Friedrich Adler, Otto Bauer, Julius Deutsch and so on) nor the "new" underground RS leaders around Joseph Buttinger believed the absurd accusations of the witch-

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<sup>93</sup> See Arnold Reisberg, *Februar 1934. Hintergründe und Folgen* (Wien, 1974), p. 19, 23.

<sup>94</sup> Figures given by McLoughlin, Szevera, *Posthum*, pp. 58s.

<sup>95</sup> See *Protokoll des VII. Weltkongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale*, 2 vols. (Erlangen, 1974), 2, pp. 507-508.

<sup>96</sup> Material kept safe in the Comintern archives proves such a denunciation by the prominent KPÖ leader Ernst Fischer. See McLoughlin and Szevera, *Posthum*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>97</sup> Figures given by Reinhard Kannonier, "Der spanische Bürgerkrieg 1936-1939", in DÖW (ed.), *Für Spaniens Freiheit. Österreicher an der Seite der Spanischen Republik 1936-1939* (Wien, 1986), p. 19.

<sup>98</sup> For the complicated relations between RS and KPÖ, see the insightful work of Franz West, *Die Linke im Ständestaat* (Wien, 1978).



trials in Moscow against a whole generation of bolsheviks; and the KPÖ not only defended every word of Andrei Vyshinsky's slanders, but also requested an agreement for common struggle against what it called "Trotskyism", as precondition for any further cooperation with the Social Democrats against fascism.<sup>99</sup>

\* The popular (national) front orientation deviated sharply from the political education of a generation of KPÖ members. A new split was therefore nearly inevitable. Oppositionists in the illegal youth organization formed a group called Revolutionary Communists (*Revolutionäre Kommunisten*), which joined the (Trotskyist) Movement for a Fourth International.<sup>100</sup>

##### 5. Clandestine Work under the Nazi-Regime (1938-1945)

The independence of the country was not a matter of indifference to the Austrian workers. The RS drew up a program of the very minimum of liberties necessary to assure their commitment to the state, and make it a cause worth risking their lives. The Communists were even ready to blindly accept the continuance of the weak Austro-fascist regime, because the Nazis were such an appalling danger to them. But Kurt von Schuschnigg, the last dictator, preferred to negotiate with the Nazis: in March 1938 he confirmed the death-warrant of Austria which he had signed in July 1936 at a meeting with Hitler in Berchtesgaden.

After the Nazi invasion the conditions for underground work changed drastically. In contrast to the Austro-fascist police, the Gestapo organs had great experience with underground work (Nazis had been forbidden by the Austro-fascists) and could count on mass support from the population. Cautiously, the Central Committee of the RS ordered all members to stop every illegal activity - but this did not prevent the Gestapo from arresting most of the illegal Social Democrats known to the police. This mass repression destroyed the organization. Only individuals and small groups of militants, without communication between each other and without any contact with the emigrants outside the Nazi empire, tried to continue the resistance. The mass of the former Social Democrats tried simply to survive (in fact, after the Nazi era, one of the more prominent ones<sup>101</sup> repeated the dictum of Abbé Sieyès "On avait vécu...").

The repression against the KPÖ was even harder. But again and again the illegal cadres - sometimes with the help of emissaries sent by the emigrated leadership - built a new centralized organization. And each of these heroic efforts ended with new mass arrests by the Gestapo, with tortures, trials before the *Volksgerechtshof*, deportations into concentration camps, executions... No less than 6,300 persons were arrested as Communists in the territory of the Vienna Gestapo-headquarters from 1938 until 1943; 364 of them were sentenced to death.<sup>102</sup>

As before, the KPÖ propagated the project of a national front against the Nazis. But under the Hitler regime, as before, (petty) bourgeois alliance-partners were rare. The chances for cooperation with Social Democrats were better. In some regions, for example in Styria, even a formal entry of the whole RS organization into the KPÖ ranks was now possible - until all these activities were stopped from one day to the next by the Hitler-Stalin Pact. Under orders from the Comintern, the KPÖ now had to insult France and England, the "peaceful" powers of old, as imperialist war mongers and support Hitler in his attempts to prevent conflicts.

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<sup>99</sup> See Georg Scheuer, "Die Beteiligung des KPÖ-Apparates an den stalinistischen Verbrechen", in Schafranek, *Die Betrogenen*, pp. 17-30.

<sup>100</sup> After the formal foundation of the Fourth International in 1938, the Revolutionary Communists split from the Trotskyist world party too. For details see the autobiography of Georg Scheuer, *Nur Narren fürchten nichts* (Wien, 1991), pp. 113-117.

<sup>101</sup> That this aperçu was quoted by Bruno Pittermann, who was party chairman from 1957 to 1967 and also president of the Socialist International after 1964, is attested by Michael Genner in *Laurenz Genner*, p. 161.

<sup>102</sup> "Bericht der Gestapo Wien vom 28. März 1944" (DÖW 5.080).



Anyone who did not follow this line would inevitably be accused of being an imperialist agent.<sup>103</sup> Some Communists in the "Ostmark" simply ignored these new instructions.<sup>104</sup> Those who followed the Comintern orientation were "totally isolated from the other resistance-groups, and if there had been hopeful attempts of cooperation in the time before signing the Pact, they were now forced to use a part of the available energy for ideological defense against all non-communist resistance groups."<sup>105</sup> And this isolation took place only for ideological reasons. What would have happened if potential coalition partners or the KPÖ members had known the whole truth about Josef Stalin's infamous treatment of anti-fascists arrested in the Soviet Union - if they had known that the NKVD had handed some of them over to the Gestapo?<sup>106</sup>

After Hitler's attack against the Soviet Union, the KPÖ (like the whole Comintern) restarted their propaganda for a national front against the Nazis. An all-party Austria Liberation Front (*Österreichische Freiheitsfront*) was deemed necessary, but was never realized. In practice the KPÖ could only influence former Social Democrats and trade unionists.

By 1943 the Gestapo, with its brutal methods, had annihilated nearly all communist groups. Only individuals remained at liberty and they did what they could to follow the slogan "You are the party!". Nevertheless, in some mountainous parts of the "Ostmark" partisan groups were formed by communist cadres.<sup>107</sup> Emigrants raised Austrian Liberation Battalions (*Österreichische Freiheits-Bataillone*), affiliated to the Yugoslavian Peoples' Army.<sup>108</sup>

After Hitler's invasion of Austria, the various Trotskyist groups, in their closed world of marginality and isolation, were once again divided over the concept of revolutionary defeatism: whether and to what extent the principle slogan "The main enemy is always in one's own country!", pronounced by V.I. Lenin during the First World War, was still valid, and how it could be combined with the duty of defending the Soviet Union. Although the Trotskyists had no illusion at all about the policy of Josef Stalin, they were shocked and confused by his pact with Hitler. After the Nazi-invasion of the USSR, the built-in sectarian attitudes were pushed aside. A process of unification began, which would last until shortly after the liberation. The new organization, called Austrian International Communists (*Internationale Kommunisten Österreichs*; IKÖ), counted 196 cadres in its ranks (fourteen of them being shop stewards) in April 1945. But it soon became clear, that the Trotskyists' hopes for a repetition of 1917 were in vain. And the IKÖ-members could only try to continue their underground work - now under the watchful eye of the Red-Army soldiers and the organs of the NKVD.

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<sup>103</sup> "Gegen den imperialistischen Krieg - für den Frieden und die Freiheit der Völker! Erklärung der Kommunistischen Parteien Deutschlands, Österreichs und der Tschechoslowakei", *Die Welt*, no. 12, 6 November 1939, pp. 238-240.

<sup>104</sup> Documented by Hans Safrian, "Zum Verhältnis zwischen Kommunisten und Sozialisten 1939-1941", in Gerhard Bisovsky et al., *Der Hitler-Stalin-Pakt. Voraussetzungen, Hintergründe, Anmerkungen* (Wien, 1990), pp. 147-151.

<sup>105</sup> Helmut Konrad, *Widerstand an Donau und Moldau. KPÖ und KPČ zur Zeit des Hitler-Stalin-Paktes* (Wien, 1978), p. 123.

<sup>106</sup> For the Austrian (and German) victims this "extradition", which started even before the Hitler-Stalin Pact was officially signed, has been documented by Hans Schafranek, *Zwischen NKWD und GESTAPO. Die Auslieferung deutscher und österreichischer Antifaschisten aus der Sowjetunion an Nazideutschland 1937-1941* (Frankfurt, 1990).

<sup>107</sup> See Sepp Pliseis, *Vom Ebro zum Dachstein* (Linz, 1946). A falsified version of this book was published under the title *Partisan der Berge* (Wien, 1971).

<sup>108</sup> The best impression of this armed resistance is given by Willibald Ingo Holzer, "Die österreichischen Bataillone im Verband der NOV i POJ. Die Kampfgruppe Avantgarde/Steiermark. Die Partisanengruppe Leoben-Donauwitz. Die KPÖ im militanten politischen Widerstand" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universität Wien, 1971).



## 6. National Question

After the dissolution of the Monarchy, most inhabitants of rest-Austria considered themselves Germans. Many of them - not only members of the bourgeoisie and the middle-classes, but also workers - expected that an affiliation with Germany would bring a solution of many economic and social problems.

At the height of the revolutionary tide, the Communists could more or less ignore this problem. The national question was to them subordinated to the world revolution, which would change the whole landscape of Europe within a few month or years. Later, the Communists tried to find a clear orientation. But which could they turn? On the one hand, all the SDAP leaders were in favour of affiliation and stressed the right to national self-determination. This was also accepted by the Communists. In some periods, the perspective of uniting all German-speaking people was also supported by the leaders of the Berlin section of the Comintern. On the other hand, organs of the same Comintern and especially of the Balkan Communist Federation, which resided in Vienna for years, preferred an arrangement with the countries of south-eastern Europe.

These different influences, combined with internal factional struggles, for years made it impossible for the KPÖ to formulate a stable position: sometimes the Communists fought for Soviet-Austria, sometimes they propagated a Federation of the Danube-Balkan countries, sometimes they preferred an affiliation with (Soviet-) Germany.<sup>109</sup>

In the spring of 1937, Alfred Klahr (1904-1944)<sup>110</sup> published his thesis about the existence of an Austrian nation in the theoretical periodical of the Party *Weg und Ziel*.<sup>111</sup> Being a member of the Central Committee, he had formulated his ideas in obedience of an order of the Political Bureau. The intention of this thesis, which was based on the - then famous - study by Josef Stalin of the national question,<sup>112</sup> was to build an ideological bridge for the politics of popular and (later) national fronts. According to Klahr, resistance against Hitler should be defined as a national liberation movement against oppression of the differently minded Germans. And in this national movement all Austrians, including reactionaries of all kind, such as Austro-fascists and monarchists, should fight side by side, forgetting all past differences.

This new orientation formed a sharp break, not only with the general Austrian understanding of the national question, but also with the whole marxist tradition. Therefore "deviationists", mostly militants from the Communist Youth and the Red Students (*Rote Studenten*),<sup>113</sup> organized a clandestine faction and published the periodical *Ziel und Weg* (Goal and Road).

With the expulsion of all known members of the *Ziel und Weg* group as "Trotskyists" and "Fascists", the national question within the KPÖ was definitely solved. (The expelled comrades formed a group which was linked with the so-called Berlin Opposition [*Berliner Opposition*], led by Karl Volk.<sup>114</sup> Under the Nazi-regime, followers of the *Ziel und Weg* group, together with a group of militants from the Communist Youth, the Soldiers

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<sup>109</sup> For the modification of these positions, see Fritz Keller, "Die KPÖ und die nationale Frage", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*, no. 2/1977, pp. 183-185, and Klaus Kellermann, *Die Kommunistischen Parteien Westeuropas. Entwicklung zur Sozialdemokratie oder Sekte?* (Stuttgart, 1988), pp. 84-85.

<sup>110</sup> For contrasting views on him, compare Fritz Keller, "Alfred Klahr. Theoretiker der österreichischen Nation", *Neue AZ*, 13 February 1987 and Hilde Koplenig, "Alfred Klahr", *Zeitgeschichte*, no. 4/1976, pp. 97-112.

<sup>111</sup> Rudolf [i.e. Alfred Klahr], "Zur nationalen Frage in Österreich", *Weg und Ziel*, no. 3-4, March-April 1937.

<sup>112</sup> Josef Stalin, "Marxismus und nationale Frage", in Stalin, *Werke*, 2, pp. 266-333.

<sup>113</sup> A rather ideological one-sided report on these events is given by Maria Tidl, *Die Roten Studenten. Dokumente und Erinnerungen 1938-1945* (Wien, 1976), pp. 136-137.

<sup>114</sup> The genesis and political positions of this group are described by Heinz Brandt, *Ein Traum, der nicht durchführbar ist. Mein Weg zwischen Ost und West* (München, 1967), pp. 81-83.



Soviet (*Soldaten-Rat*), organized defeatist propaganda among the Armed Forces.<sup>115</sup> From then on, the thesis of the Austrian nation became an integral part of communist party doctrine. Thus, in the night of 11 March 1938 the Central Committee published a proclamation against Hitler's invasion with slogans such as "Red-white-red until death!" (*Rot-weiß-rot bis in den Tod!*),<sup>116</sup> produced only by Austro-fascists before. The Communists remained isolated with their position, however.<sup>117</sup> The illegal RS and most other Austrians did not become conscious of being a nation until later, under the Nazi-occupation or after the Second World War.

But the national problem in Austria cannot be separated from the question of the national minorities in the country and especially the day-to-day behaviour toward these people in the KPÖ. Croats and Slovenes, being mostly small farmers on the southern and eastern borders of the country,<sup>118</sup> played a small role in the party until the partisan struggle during the Second World War - not so the Jews and Czechs.

The Jews in Austria had played a very important role in the rise of capitalism and became an influential part of the enlightened (petty) bourgeoisie. After the First World War, Vienna became the centre of a tendency of the *Poale Zion* world movement which wanted affiliation with the Third International. Some of the followers of this tendency emigrated to Palestine; others joined the KPÖ as individuals.<sup>119</sup> They were attracted to it by its internationalist character. They wished for assimilation and were convinced that they could find a place for themselves in Austrian society if only the economic and social structure were to be drastically altered. Unfortunately for these "non-Jewish Jews" - to quote a famous formula of Isaac Deutscher - there was hidden anti-Semitism even in the KPÖ (as in the whole Austrian labour movement).<sup>120</sup>

Complicated from the very beginning was the national question of the Czechs (and Slovaks),<sup>121</sup> a minority of poor immigrants (maids, brickmakers, shoemakers and so on) who had come to the capital in the years of the Monarchy. In some districts of Vienna this minority was in fact the majority, with its own network of cultural and political organizations. At the fourth party congress (1921) the Czech Centralists (*Tschechische Zentralisten*) joined the KPÖ. From then on, nearly 10% of the organization belonged to this minority. They were permitted to set up a separate sector. But shortly after unification the Czechs too became involved in factional fights, being followers of Josef Frey. The most prominent figure among them was the poet Hugo Sonka alias Sonnenschein (1889-1953). (In 1947 - after ten years in the concentration camp of Auschwitz! - he was accused of collaborating with the Nazis and sentenced to twenty years of prison in Prague.<sup>122</sup>) Under the Nazis, the

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<sup>115</sup> Although he fraudently attributes the whole clandestine network to Communist Youth, detailed information can be found in Eduard Rabofsky, "Über das Wesen der Gruppe Soldatenrat. Erinnerungen und Einschätzungen", in Helmut Konrad and Wolfgang Neugebauer (ed.), *Arbeiterbewegung-Faschismus-Nationalbewußtsein* (Wien, etc., 1983), pp. 213-224.

<sup>116</sup> *Rundschau*, no. 16, 17 March 1938, p. 482.

<sup>117</sup> For the controversies between Social Democrats and Communists on this subject, see Helmut Konrad, "Die Arbeiterbewegung und die österreichische Nation", in Konrad und Neugebauer (eds.), *Arbeiterbewegung*, pp. 367-380.

<sup>118</sup> See *Geschichte der Kärntner Slowenen von 1918 bis zur Gegenwart* (Klagenfurt, 1988).

<sup>119</sup> A short history of the *Poale Zion* is given by John Bunzl, *Klassenkampf in der Diaspora. Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Arbeiterbewegung* (Wien, 1975), pp. 125-131.

<sup>120</sup> No study has been done dealing specifically with anti-Semitism within the KPÖ, but the book of Leopold Spira, *Feindbild "Jud". 100 Jahre proletarischer Antisemitismus in Österreich* (Wien-München, 1981) is of interest in this context.

<sup>121</sup> See Michael John, "Vereinnahmung, Bedrohung, Germanisierung und Resistenz der Wiener Tschechen", in Rudolf Ardel und Hans Hautmann (eds.), *Arbeiterschaft und Nationalsozialismus in Österreich. In Memoriam Karl R. Stadler* (Wien-Zürich, 1990), pp. 335-358.

<sup>122</sup> See Hans-Heinz Hahnl, "Hugo Sonka (Sonnenschein)", in Memorial (ed.), *Stalin-Opfer*, pp. 85-95.



Czechs formed a resistance movement of their own in Vienna, partly under the influence of the Communists.<sup>123</sup>

### 7. Cultural Work and Influences

As all parties of the Comintern, the KPÖ, during its legal period, had an agitprop-section, that organized choral societies ("Sprech-Chöre"), which made stage productions on themes such as the October Revolution or abortion.<sup>124</sup> To support these activities, in February 1930 an Austrian League of the Proletarian Revolutionary Writers (*Bund der proletarisch-revolutionären Schriftsteller Österreichs*) was set up<sup>125</sup> as the Austrian section of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers (*Internationale Vereinigung revolutionärer Schriftsteller*), with headquarters in Moscow. This organization was headed by the authors Ernst Fabri (1891-1966) and Peter Schnur (?-1963), who were unknown to the general public.<sup>126</sup>

In the inter-war period Sigmund Freud and his disciples were active in Vienna. This resulted in ideas strongly connected with psychoanalysis influencing the whole workers movement: many members of the SDAP practiced socialist life-reform (*sozialistische Lebensreform*), meaning the attempt to create human solidarity through a new life-style. Radical changes were advocated in the day-to-day behaviour toward family, women, children, and sexuality.<sup>127</sup> The Communists radicalized these intentions. For example, the first chairwoman of the KPÖ, Elfriede Friedländer, publicly defended the absolute right to choose how to live: promiscuously, polygamously or monogamously.<sup>128</sup> Against this background, a rather unconventional experiment within the framework of the Comintern becomes more understandable: followers of the radical psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957), mostly KPÖ-members, in 1928 founded the Socialist Society for Sexual Advice and Sexual Research (*Sozialistische Gesellschaft für Sexualberatung und Sexualforschung*). In meetings of this society talks by Wilhelm Reich included such titles as "The sexual question of youth", "Marriage-moral and marriage-calamity", and "Sexual disorder and fitness for work". Advisory boards for persons with sexual problems were opened in Vienna. The society organized solidarity work for victims of repressive sexual legislation, especially for women who were had been punished for illegal abortions. The only Austrian newspaper which openly supported these activities was the *Rote Fahne*.<sup>129</sup>

Even under fascism, the Communists preserved their specific culture in small circles: their revolutionary workers' songs<sup>130</sup> and their commemoration days.<sup>131</sup> In jails or concentrations camps they were always busy

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<sup>123</sup> For details of this clandestine work, see Rudolf John, "Vom Konzentrationslager zum Parteiverfahren", *Fortschrittliche Wissenschaft*, no. 26/1990, pp. 66-69.

<sup>124</sup> Materials on these activities can be found in Annemarie Türk, "Kultur und Propaganda. Zur Kulturarbeit der KPÖ 1918-1934", *Internationale Tagung der Historiker der Arbeiterbewegung* (ed.), 12. *Linzer Konferenz 1981* (Wien, 1983), pp. 236-245 and in the biographies of Boris Brainin (1905- ) (Robert Streibel, "Das fünfte Pseudonym", in Schafranek, *Die Betrogenen*, pp. 125-154) and Fritz Jensen (1903-1955) (Eva Barilich, *Fritz Jensen - Arzt an vielen Fronten* [Wien, 1991], pp. 34-45).

<sup>125</sup> "Was wollen die proletarisch-revolutionären Schriftsteller?", *Rote Fahne*, 9 February 1930.

<sup>126</sup> For details, see Gerald Musger, "Der Bund der proletarisch-revolutionären Schriftsteller Österreichs (1930-1934)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universität Graz, 1977).

<sup>127</sup> The best available documentation of these attempts is *Sozialismus und persönliche Lebensgestaltung. Texte aus der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Wien, 1981).

<sup>128</sup> Elfriede Friedländer, *Sexualethik und Kommunismus* (Wien, 1920), p. 49.

<sup>129</sup> See Karl Fallend, *Wilhelm Reich in Wien. Psychoanalyse und Politik* (Wien-Salzburg, 1988), pp. 115-127.

<sup>130</sup> Collected in *Hundert Kampf- und Volkslieder* (Wien, 1952).

<sup>131</sup> For details, see Peter Cardorff, *Was gibt's denn da zu feiern?* (Wien, 1983), pp. 44-45.



organizing "schools" with courses concerning not only political subjects, but also matters of natural science and arts.

Among those who were KPÖ members or sympathizers for some time were the following writers and artists:

- \* The architect and creator of the so called Frankfurt kitchen (Frankfurter Küche) Grete Schütte-Lihotzky (1897- ).<sup>132</sup>
- \* The composers Hans Eisler (1898-1962)<sup>133</sup> - known worldwide known for his solidarity song - and Marcel Rubin (1905- )<sup>134</sup>
- \* The cultural-theorist Ernst Fischer (1899-1972).<sup>135</sup>
- \* The Ukrainian economist and theorist Roman Rosdolsky (1898-1967).<sup>136</sup>
- \* The essayist and psychologist Manes Sperber (1905-1984).
- \* The painters Carry Hauser (1895-1985), Heinrich Sussmann (1904-1986) and Willy Verkauf-Verlon (1917- ).<sup>137</sup>
- \* The German translator of Vladimir Majakovski's poems Hugo Huppert (1902-1982).
- \* The writers Franz Theodor Csokor (1885-1969), Erich Fried (1921-1988),<sup>138</sup> Egon Erwin Kisch (1885-1948),<sup>139</sup> Theodor Kramer (1897-1958),<sup>140</sup> Jura Soyfer (1912-1939),<sup>141</sup> Berthold Viertel (1885-1953) and Franz Werfel (1890-1945).
- \* The former Trotskyist Ernst Federn (1914- ) edited the minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society.<sup>142</sup>

#### 8. Influences from abroad

All critics - especially those from its own ranks - concurred in the opinion that the KPDÖ was a

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<sup>132</sup> See Grete Schütte-Lihotzky, *Erinnerungen aus dem Widerstand 1938-1945* (Hamburg, 1985).

<sup>133</sup> See Hanns Eisler, *Musik und Politik. Schriften 1924-1948* (Leipzig, 1973).

<sup>134</sup> See Hartmut Krones, "Marcel Rubin. Leben, Werk und Wirken" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universität Wien, 1982).

<sup>135</sup> See Ernst Fischer, *Kultur, Literatur, Politik* (Frankfurt, 1984) and *Von der Notwendigkeit der Kunst* (Frankfurt, 1985).

<sup>136</sup> Among other things, he wrote the famous study *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Marxschen "Kapital"* (Frankfurt/M., 1968).

<sup>137</sup> See Willy Verkauf-Verlon, *Situationen. Eine autobiographische Wort-Collage* (Wien, 1983).

<sup>138</sup> See Gerhard Lampe, *"Ich will mich erinnern an alles, was man vergißt". Erich Fried - Biographie und Werk* (Köln, 1981).

<sup>139</sup> See Johann Kronberger, "Egon Erwin Kisch" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universität Wien, 1971).

<sup>140</sup> See Erwin Chvojka (ed.), *Theodor Kramer. Gesammelte Gedichte* (Wien, 1985)

<sup>141</sup> See Hans Arlt, "Jura Soyfer. Eine literaturhistorische Studie" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universität Salzburg, 1988).

<sup>142</sup> *Protokolle der Wiener Psychoanalytischen Vereinigung* (New York, 1962-1975; Frankfurt, 1976). - Ernst Federn has published an autobiography: *Witnessing psychoanalysis. From Vienna back to Vienna via Buchenwald and the USA* (London, 1990), which contains a lot of facts about the repression of Stalinists against so-called "Trotskyists", even in the concentration camp Buchenwald.



"Homunculus"<sup>143</sup> from the very beginning. One of the militants of the first hour, Franz Koritschoner, declared in an article in the *Rote Fahne* that the party was only the product of Russian intervention. Austrian Communists were to help overcome the opposition of the German Spartacus League (*Spartakusbund*) against the foundation of the Third International.<sup>144</sup> In fact, the Communist Party delegated one of its leading members, Karl Steinhardt (1875-1963), to Moscow in March 1919. He arrived later than expected after a harrowing seventeen-day journey: he had been in jail in Romania for days. At the time of his arrival, the international delegates' first plenary session had decided not to found a new International yet, but rather to meet just as a preparatory conference. Under the name Gruber, Steinhardt spoke enthusiastically about revolution in German-Austria.<sup>145</sup> Together with other delegates, he proposed a new motion to found the Communist International, which was then accepted.<sup>146</sup>

Simultaneously, the leadership of the Hungarian Soviet Republic sent one Ernst Bettelheim as emissary to Vienna. In his own words, his instructions were "to reorganize the Austrian party, even if this should require its destruction".<sup>147</sup> This was not just a catch phrase. With the help of Hungarian funds, Bettelheim removed the elected leadership and instituted a directorate to prepare an insurrection on 15 June 1919.

It is not quite clear whether Bettelheim held a formal mandate of the Communist International for his mission. Whatever the case, his probable successor in this function was the Czech Alois Neurath,<sup>148</sup> who was a follower of the tactical line of Grigorij Zinoviev. He is said to have used his mandate to remove Josef Frey from the party's leadership. The next emissary was the Hungarian Eugen Landler.<sup>149</sup> He was followed by Georgi Dimitrov, who was at this time also in the leadership of the Balkan Communist Federation. He planted the so-called "bolshhevik nucleus" into the faction-ridden organizational body of the KPÖ and around the new party leaders Johann Kopenig and, later, Friedl Fürnberg.<sup>150</sup> For this operation a further directorate was needed. It was established shortly after the seventh party congress in March 1924. One important member of this directorate was the German Karl Frank - a clear sign that the German section played the role of supervisor for the little Austrian organization.<sup>151</sup>

Johann Kopenig was a prototype of the new type of Comintern leaders. Like William Z. Foster in the USA, Maurice Thorez in France and Ernst Thälmann in Germany, he was a worker and revolutionary in the sense of the narrow-minded definition given by Josef Stalin ("Revolutionary is he who is ready to protect und

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<sup>143</sup> Bettelheim, "Bettelheimerei", p. 948.

<sup>144</sup> Franz Koritschoner, "Vorwärts zur bolschewistischen Partei", *Rote Fahne*, 11 September 1925.

<sup>145</sup> See John Riddell (ed.), *Founding the Communist International. Proceedings and Documents of the First Congress, March 1919* (New York, 1987), pp. 134-139.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167-183. See also Steinhardt, "Antrag", p. 70.

<sup>147</sup> Bettelheim, "Bettelheimerei", p. 948.

<sup>148</sup> Some biographic notes about him are given by Leopold Grünwald in "Die Menschenmühle. Die kommunistische Weltbewegung, ein Riesen-Durchhaus", 2 vols. (unpublished manuscript, DÖW 22.233), 1, p. 78.

<sup>149</sup> Lucien Laurat [i.e. Otto Maschl], "Le partie communiste autrichien", in Jacques Freymond (ed.), *Contributions a l'histoire du Comintern* (Genf, 1965), p. 88. For the activities of Eugen Landler during the Hungarian revolution see Serge, *Revolutionär*, p. 213-214.

<sup>150</sup> Dimitrov's leading role in "eliminating the principle-less opportunism" is described by Franz Freihaut in "Erinnerungen an Georgi Dimitroff", in *G. Dimitroff. Internationale Tagung anlässlich seines 100. Geburtstag, Mitteilungen des bulgarischen Forschungsinstitutes in Österreich*, V, 1983, pp. 15-19.

<sup>151</sup> "All great political questions, all questions of party tactics as well as questions of the Communist International will be debated and decided together" says a letter from Hermann Remmele to the leaders of the KPÖ, dated 11 January 1925 (original in the - not ordered - SDAP archives).



defend the USSR without any mental reservation, open and frank, without any second thoughts..."<sup>152</sup>).

With the help of new emissaries - only the Russian Petrokov and the German Wilhelm Pieck are known by name - and with increasingly anti-democratic measures, the so-called "bolshevik nucleus" first, as shown above, expelled all dissidents of the rank and file. Then Kopenig and his confederates established an internal regime where "deviation" was unthinkable.

The advancement of this "bolshevik nucleus" must be seen in connection with the financial support of the Comintern. Internal figures given to the Austrian Commission of the Third International in September 1924 clearly show that only about 50% of the party apparatus costs were paid by the membership; only 45 to 48% of each edition of the *Rote Fahne* were sold.<sup>153</sup>

It can be supposed that the underground existence of the KPÖ after the year 1933 increased its financial and political dependency. The zenith was reached when the party leadership around Kopenig fled from Prague and Paris to Moscow. In the "Hotel Lux", the centre for prominent refugees there, they underwent "the absolute regiment of the 'wysshije organy' [higher organs]", better known under the contraction NKVD. Not even a meeting of all KPÖ members living in Moscow was allowed.<sup>154</sup> Any opposition or even simple acts of solidarity with jailed, tortured and murdered comrades became life-threatening.

Back in Vienna, "the Moscow clique, as it... was called in party jargon",<sup>155</sup> rebuilt the KPÖ in 1945 according to the model of the Stalinist parties in eastern countries, which later became "people's democracies". The financial and political influence of the Soviet occupying power was omnipresent - plainly visible in the person of a Red-Army officer, who was watching all sessions of the Political Bureau and Central Committee. But this is another chapter of party history...

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<sup>152</sup> Josef Stalin, "Die internationale Lage und die Verteidigung der UdSSR", in Stalin, *Werke*, 10, p. 45.

<sup>153</sup> See "Bericht des Polizeipräsidenten Schober an den Landeshauptmann von Wien über eine Hausdurchsuchung bei der Internationalen Roten Hilfe und im KPÖ-Sekretariat am 1.4.1925, Pol.Dion, Pr.Z. IV-1481/25" (original in the - not ordered - SDAP archives).

<sup>154</sup> Friedrich Hexmann, "Die KPÖ-Führung im Moskauer Exil und die Verfolgung der österreichischen Kommunisten in der Sowjetunion", *Weg und Ziel*, no. 7, July 1991, pp. 343s.

<sup>155</sup> Josef Meisel, *Die Mauer im Kopf. Erinnerungen eines ausgeschlossenen Kommunisten 1945-1970* (Wien, 1986), p. 17.