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## Gramsci was a Shibboleth

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# Gramsci was a Shibboleth

## **Abstract**

During his lifetime, Antonio Gramsci concerned himself little with political events in Austria. Similarly, his posthumously published writings had little influence on the left-of-centre political landscape in that country. Nevertheless, the following interview with Walter Baier, former Chairman of the Austrian Communist Party, examines some of the points of contact and connections between Gramsci and the Austrian Left during the twentieth century. Such points of contact include a) Gramsci's stay in Vienna between 1923 and 1924 and his critical relationship with Austro-Marxism from a philosophical and political point of view; b) the peripheral influence of Gramsci's thought on early Eurocommunism in the Austrian Communist Party between 1965 and 1969, which was due above all to the efforts of Franz Marek; c) the Marxist-Leninist reception of Gramsci's work by the leadership of the Austrian Communist Party which took place at the beginning of the 1980s and was intended as a defensive manoeuvre to counter heterodox interpretations of Marxism within and outside the party; and d) the possible significance of Gramsci for Otto Bauer's concept of integral Socialism, seen as a revolutionary transformational project for the incipient twenty-first century.

## **Keywords**

Bauer, Gramsci, Austro-Marxism, integral socialism, KPÖ

## ***Gramsci was a Shibboleth***

Interview with Walter Baier on  
Gramsci's reception in the KPÖ:  
conducted by Stefan Pimmer

*An initial contact between Gramsci and Austria took place at the end of November 1923. After an eighteen-month stay in the Soviet Union, Gramsci was sent from Moscow to Vienna, from there to reorganize the Communist Party of Italy (PCI), and to align it with the Comintern. At that time Italy had already been under Fascism for more than a year. In Austria however, in the wake of the October revolution, the Social Democrats had succeeded in imposing progressive social policies, between 1918 and 1920 at a federal level, and up until 1934 with their Red Vienna experiment. Gramsci seemed however unimpressed by this social reform project. Although from an intellectual point of view his time in Vienna was extraordinarily significant, no written documents exist where he deals in any detail with the political events in Austria and Vienna. Especially from the perspective of the theory of hegemony, it would have been interesting if he had examined the Red Vienna experience more closely. How might Gramsci have considered this social reform project, given his political experiences in Italy and the conceptual framework he later developed in prison?*

This is an interesting question, but it is a difficult one to answer. One view is to consider that Otto Bauer represents the social democratic counterpart of Antonio Gramsci. From one perspective I find this accurate, since they both pointed out the impossibility of transferring the Soviet experience to western Europe. For the Comintern, this view would have required a paradigm shift. From a social democratic perspective, what was special about Bauer and his followers was that, unlike mainstream social democracy, they maintained their solidarity with the Soviet Union in the 1920s. This can be gathered from his longer work *The Austrian Revolution* and the shorter *Bolshevism or social democracy?*. His ambivalent attitude towards Bolshevism brings Bauer closer to Gramsci. However in my view, Bauer can also be seen as an Austrian Lenin, albeit with an inverted sign: the historical situation of Austrian social democracy obliged him, similarly to Lenin, to reflect on all the issues of revolutionary strategy and tactics. In Bauer's case however (and this

is the inverted sign), it was about demonstrating that at that given moment, a revolutionary break with capitalism was unachievable. This stance obviously antagonized his Communist contemporaries, and led to vigorous opposition. However that tells us nothing about whether Bauer's arguments were valid or not, nor does it alter the perspicacity of his analysis, which is striking, especially when read today. For example I agree with his views on the events in Austria in 1918 and 1919, and his criticism of the Communists. I believe that the idea of seizing power from the streets and proclaiming the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the Communists wanted, would have led to the disaster that Bauer predicted.

In this respect, Bauer's choice of a transformation – for him a revolutionary choice – was in my opinion more realistic. Here too, there is proximity with Gramsci. However I also believe that Gramsci would have criticized the Austro-Marxists on two counts. Gramsci was a revolutionary, while the Austro-Marxists were inclined to put off the revolutionary moment until some undefined future time. This is something he would surely not have liked. On the other hand, the Gramsci of the *Prison Notebooks* would possibly have criticized the Austro-Marxists' verbal radicalism and strategy as sectarian. The Austro-Marxists' policy, which after their withdrawal from the coalition government marked all the 1920s, alienated the Catholic and agrarian parts of Austria. The Christian Social Party essentially isolated the Social Democrats in Vienna and several large cities, which on the one hand made possible the astonishing local political experiment known as Red Vienna. On the other hand however, the Social Democrats' verbal radicalism alienated part of the urban middle classes, who abandoned them for the Christian Social Party and later for the Nazis; and from the beginning of the 1920s on, the Social Democrats reacted with growing incomprehension to the fact that Catholic and agrarian Austria was increasingly opposed to them, and to the Red Vienna experiment that they represented. In 1926, Otto Bauer tried to open the party up to Catholic rural society with a new party programme, the famous Linz Programme. However, this effort was overshadowed by the verbal radicalism he felt obliged to embrace as he competed with the KPÖ. And that is the exact opposite of a Gramscian conception of hegemony. This consists of broadening your own ideological and political base by means of alliances and

the ideological inclusion of popular common sense. As regards Red Vienna, Gramsci's revolutionary passion would have gone further than the actual reform project in fact did. From the 1920s on, and despite its attractiveness, this reform project was destined to fail. That is apparent from the architecture of the social housing, the building of which was paradigmatic of Red Vienna's achievements. Their design suggests the idea that the workers' movement would be able to retreat to them as if to their fortresses. Incidentally, this was criticized by Theodor Körner, the military and political adviser of the Social Democratic defence association *Der Schutzbund*, as a move in the wrong direction, doubting that a revolution in Austria could be brought to victory by means of a defensive military strategy. Here too, Gramsci would have criticized the Austro-Marxist leaders.

In any case it is difficult to make this comparison, because the differences between the two are all but clear-cut: on one hand, the passionate revolutionary Gramsci would have certainly positioned himself with respect to Red Vienna to the left of the Austrian Social Democrats. On the other hand, the theorist of hegemony would have criticized, so to speak, from the "right" the Social Democratic idea that fifty per cent of the electorate is sufficient to establish socialism.

*The Red Vienna project was essentially sustained by the Austro-Marxist ideas of Otto Bauer, Max Adler, Rudolf Hilferding, Karl Renner and others. Gramsci had no comprehensive knowledge of their writings and tended to stand in opposition to Austro-Marxism. His critique in the Prison Notebooks concentrated principally on the Austro-Marxists' attempt to link the teachings of Marx to those of Kant. Gramsci insisted on the originality and autonomy of a Marxist philosophy as developed by Antonio Labriola. Apart from this philosophy-based critique, what commonalities or differences do you see between Gramsci's reformulation of Marxism as a philosophy of praxis and Austro-Marxism, not only from a philosophical but also a political point of view, for example in relation to the national question, the problem of hegemony, the State or that of democracy?*

First of all, it is impossible to talk about Austro-Marxism as a single entity, as it included a wide range of theoretical positions. Secondly, I do believe that the concept of hegemony contains some

Neo-Kantian features. The epistemological idea behind it is that meaning arises out of ideological struggle, that is to say, reality is not simply found, but rather comes into being through collective ideologies. For me Max Adler's synthesis of neo-Kantianism and Marxist thought is highly promising, although much indebted to that particular time and formulated in a highly abstract manner. Gramsci notes in the *Prison Notebooks* that Lenin's philosophy is to be found rather in his practical politics than in his philosophical works, and this obviously represents a criticism of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. On the other hand, Gramsci adopts a hostile stance toward Kantian interpretations of Marxism. I believe that in this respect he goes beyond his own intentions. If you read *The Austrian Revolution* by Otto Bauer, which he wrote in 1921, you will find many aspects that also crop up in Gramsci. Yet Bauer formulates them in part in a more concrete form, because they were the expression of the theorizing of a party leader who at the time actually represented forty per cent of the population, and was therefore in constant communication with that movement. In addition, it was an extremely challenging historical moment. In this book you will find all the possible stages of a revolutionary struggle, from the equilibrium of class forces that finds expression in a coalition government, through to a people's republic, which was supposed to transform into a social democracy, and finally the defensive phase after the equilibrium of class forces is subverted by the right. All of this is covered. And in my opinion it boils down to a concrete manifestation of the idea of war of position. There are a number of formulations in *The Austrian Revolution* that could indeed be Gramsci's. I even believe that once the concept of hegemony makes an appearance. So in this respect Bauer and Gramsci are very close. But the impulse that led to *The Austrian Revolution* and even more to the writing of the 1926 Linz Programme was in my opinion a Leninist rather than a Gramscian one. The more that Austrian Social Democrats were forced onto the defensive during the 1920s, the more mechanical and Machiavellian became their understanding of politics. It had not been so during the post-war period of revolutionary ferment. In *The Austrian Revolution* for example, Bauer describes in great detail how, in the absence of the means of power, a State founded on the basis of a coalition with the Christian Social Party could govern only through consent. This

is Gramscian thinking. But when the Social Democrats withdrew from the coalition, the debate shifted to the level of power politics. And ultimately, this gave rise to a retreat to the positions contained in the 1926 Linz Programme: should the ruling class not respect democracy, social democracy would smash their resistance using the means of dictatorship. Thus the repressive nature of the State and in general the question of power would be given priority over the question of hegemony. The political problem of a mass party finding itself isolated, despite an impressive electoral base, could not be conceptualized in this way.

*It is little known beyond Austria's borders that an early form of Eurocommunism existed in the Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ). After the demise of National Socialism, those returning from their Moscow exile, who were obedient to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), took control of the party. Their dogmatic orientation was predominantly responsible for discrediting the KPÖ with the public and for leading the party towards its loss of political significance. After an initial serious crisis in 1956 in relation to the 20<sup>th</sup> party congress of the CPSU and the bloody repression of the communist reform project in Hungary, during the 1960s there was a gradual increase in voices calling for critical distance from Moscow and a new ideological and political orientation of the KPÖ. At the 19<sup>th</sup> party congress in 1965, this new orientation was indeed adopted: despite resistance from the wing that was faithful to Moscow, autonomy and democratic socialism, which were to determine party policy until the 20<sup>th</sup> party congress in 1969, became central points of reference. This phase of Austrian anticipation of Eurocommunism probably coincides with the first time Gramsci played a significant part in internal party discussions. What influence did the figure of Gramsci have on the representatives of the reform project and their political positions?*

I believe that Gramsci's influence on Austrian Eurocommunism was extremely peripheral and came primarily through Franz Marek. In 1951 Marek had a serious car accident while in Italy and during his extended hospitalization there, came into contact with Gramsci's writings.<sup>1</sup> I see in the Austrian attempt in the 1960s to reform

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<sup>1</sup> For the political biography of Franz Marek and his appropriation of Gramsci see Maximilian Graf/Sarah Knoll, *Beruf und Berufung Kommunist. Franz Marek (1913-1979) – Eine biographische Skizze* in *Franz Marek: Beruf und Berufung Kommunist. Lebenserinnerungen und Schlüsseltexte*, ed. and introduction Maximilian Graf and Sarah Knoll, Wien, Mandelbaum Verlag, 2017, pp. 15-103.

communism – a very early expression of the crisis of western communist parties – also the subterranean effect of Austro-Marxism’s legacy. In the KPÖ after 1945 there were on the one hand those returning from emigration to the Soviet Union, from among whom the inner party leadership was recruited. With the exception of Ernst Fischer they were traditional communists, who had joined the party in the 1920s, thus prior to 1934. On the other hand, there was a highly influential group of (in the main Jewish) returnees from emigration to England and elsewhere. Their intellectual biographies were influenced by Austro-Marxism: many had attended Hans Kelsens’ university lectures and become familiar with his political liberalism. After 1934 thousands of social democrats entered the illegal KPÖ and made up the majority of its active members, representing two different cultures, trade unionists, municipal politicians and organizers on the one hand, and intellectuals who in 1934 and 1938 switched to the KPÖ on the other hand. However the politically and organizationally-engaged people who organized the party’s majority after 1945 were opposed to Austro-Marxism. For them, Otto Bauer bore the main responsibility for the defeat of the Austrian workers’ movement. Yet an Austro-Marxist culture continued to exist beneath the surface. And it was in this tradition that many intellectuals, who at the end of the 1950s had distanced themselves from the official party line, made attempts to interpret unsettling events such as the Soviet show trials of the 1930s, the 20<sup>th</sup> party congress of the CPSU and the Soviet army’s march into Hungary in 1956. In this context, Herbert Steiner’s work *On the example of Otto Bauer – the October Revolution and Austro-Marxism*, published in 1967 (thus coinciding with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution) in a special issue of the theory journal “Weg und Ziel”, is remarkable.<sup>2</sup> In this article, Steiner highlights Bauer’s fundamentally positive attitude towards the Soviet Union in order to cautiously rehabilitate his life’s work in the communist sphere. The date of this publication, which could not have taken place without the consent of the party leadership, is in my view an indication of the influence of Austro-Marxism on the reorientation of the KPÖ at that time. And that is why, in my opinion, the influence of Austro-Marxism is more

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<sup>2</sup> Herbert Steiner, *Am Beispiel Otto Bauers – die Oktoberrevolution und der Austromarxismus* in “Weg und Ziel”, Sondernummer, No. 21, July 1967, pp. 3-22.

important in explaining the history of the KPÖ than that of Gramsci. Of course Gramsci stood in high regard, given the mood at that time within the international communist movement, where the PCI enjoyed great prestige not only because of its strength, but also thanks to Togliatti and his Yalta Memorandum.

*Nevertheless thanks to Marek's efforts, Gramsci was not unknown within the party. Indeed, the theory journal of the KPÖ "Weg und Ziel", which Marek edited, was in a certain sense aligned with Gramsci. Were there attempts at that time by the dogmatic wing of the KPÖ to discredit the Eurocommunist appropriation of Gramsci?*

I know of none, and I would consider it implausible. I don't think Gramsci was the central element of the discussion. Besides, because of his imprisonment and the great prestige that accrued to him in the PCI, the figure of Gramsci enjoyed wide esteem. In my opinion at that time it was unthinkable to attack Gramsci. And I must add that the *Prison Notebooks* and other writings were unknown in Austria at that time. Even Marek often lamented the fact that Gramsci was not being read outside Italy. Yet Marek did nothing to encourage translations. My feeling is that in this respect Marek could have done more.

*The 20<sup>th</sup> party congress of the KPÖ finished with a Pyrrhic victory of the dogmatic wing, which was faithful to Moscow: this meant not only the end of the communist reform project but also led to a de facto split in the party. With the abandonment of Austrian Eurocommunism and the exclusion of Ernst Fischer, Franz Marek and many others, the engagement with Gramsci's thought also came to an end. Michael Graber<sup>3</sup> mentions in this connection that between 1969 and 1981 only one article commemorating Gramsci appeared. Not until the beginning of the 1980s did Gramsci again become topical, in the form of a "defence" of his thought from a Marxist-Leninist perspective. What exactly was this "defence" like, and which of Gramsci's ideas were focused on? Who were its protagonists and what were the reasons behind this Marxist-Leninist reception of Gramsci? Or to put it another way, against whom was this reception directed?*

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Graber, *Zur Gramsci-Rezeption in der KPÖ*; <http://www.kpoe.at/home/positionen/geschichte/antonio-gramsci/2011/zur-gramsci-rezeption-in-der-kpoe> (18.9.2018).

In 1976 under Kreisky's leadership there was a shift to the left in the Social Democrats' youth organizations, which in part was sponsored by Josef Hindels. This shift to the left aimed to construct a leftist wing in the socialist movement, starting from the Association of Socialist Students, which had taken over the leadership of the Socialist Youth Movement. The theoretical basis of this left-leaning movement was Austro-Marxism and its plan was to establish a reference to Eurocommunism at an international level. In this context, between 1978 and 1981 conferences with international participation were held, with the aim of providing theoretical support for bridge-building between Austro-Marxism and Eurocommunism. The PCI showed interest in this leftward shift of the youth organization of an influential European social democratic party. It was taken seriously. This was firstly for political reasons, because the PCI wished to open up towards social democracy. But there was also a theoretical interest: the 1973 putsch in Chile had raised a number of important State theoretical and strategic issues that the PCI found itself facing given its political orientation toward a historic compromise with the Christian Democrats, and it hoped to find suggestions on how to deal with them from an engagement with Austro-Marxism.

Since at this same time socialist and communist students were closely collaborating over higher education policy, the debate also spilled over into the KPÖ. This was the context for an engagement with Gramsci from a Marxist-Leninist perspective. The texts written at the beginning of the 1980s by the then party ideologue Ernst Wimmer<sup>4</sup> should be seen mainly as a defensive attempt. First Wimmer tried to reduce Gramsci to those aspects that were still compatible with Marxist-Leninist dogma. This led to him presenting Gramsci as a Marxist-Leninist. However if you read Wimmer's texts carefully with this in mind, you realise that he was trying to present Gramsci as just a clever author who had made a few interesting contributions about the differing revolutionary conditions in the East and the West and on the subject of hegemony, but whose writings were otherwise uninteresting. This was Wimmer's fundamental attitude.

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<sup>4</sup> Ernst Wimmer, *Gramsci und die Revolution*, Wien, Globus Verlag, 1984.

But things possess their own dialectic. Firstly, Gramsci's language presented us young KPÖ members with the possibility of freeing ourselves from the wooden jargon of Marxism-Leninism, and that interested us; and secondly, the discussion about Gramsci that was being carried forward by the young socialists in Germany and the intellectual milieu around the German Communist Party (DKP), was accessible to us too. This was the context in which Wolfgang Fritz Haug started to publish Gramsci's writings and producing texts about him which rapidly placed him in opposition to the DKP's dominant ideology. His books, and those of a few others, were however published, since even publishers close to the party could or would not follow from one moment to the next the ideological prescriptions of the party leadership. These publications, such as Christine Buci-Glucksmann's book about Gramsci's concept of the State<sup>5</sup> and Sabine Kebir's on Gramsci's concept of culture<sup>6</sup> opened up a door. All this created an ideological openness in the KPÖ beyond Wimmer's intentions. Firstly, thanks to Wimmer, Gramsci was legitimated and secondly, this also meant that dissenting opinions with a certain theoretical claim and a connection to Gramsci could be put forward in the KPÖ. Absolutely nothing with a connection to Otto Bauer could be put forward – Bauer had again become *persona non grata*. With Gramsci though, it was possible there and then to point things out and create small cracks that remained and later grew wider.

*As is known, the KPÖ held on to its dogmatic orientation until the fall of the Berlin wall and was thrown into a deep crisis by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The latter event was at the same time the point of departure for a process of renewal: the 1991 reform-oriented party congress held at Graz produced, for the first time, an explicit condemnation of the crimes of Stalinism, a renunciation of Marxism-Leninism and an ideological opening. This orientation was confirmed at the 29<sup>th</sup> party congress in 1994, where you yourself took over the party leadership. Your time at the head of the KPÖ was characterized, alongside the expropriation of the party's financial assets by the FRG, by the dogmatic wing's attempt to undo the reform course. Did the figure of Gramsci or his thought play any role at all in the renewal process? If so, in*

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<sup>5</sup> Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci und der Staat: für eine materialistische Theorie der Philosophie*, Köln, Pahl-Rugenstein, 1981.

<sup>6</sup> Sabine Kebir, *Die Kulturkonzeption Antonio Gramscis*, München, Damnitz Verlag, 1980.

*what form? During this period was Gramsci in any way a point of reference for ideological debates? And were you oriented by Gramscian reflections or concepts in your work as the federal chairman of the KPÖ?*

It must be understood that in the wake of the collapse of communism in eastern Europe there were three immediate reactions in the theoretical field. The first consisted of a strategy of “Close your eyes and carry on!”. The second included the renunciation of Marxism and all socialist demands, while the third reaction was to identify individual, defensible, fall-back positions. An obvious fall-back position was the revival of the categorical imperative that Marx had formulated in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, namely, to overthrow all conditions in which human beings are debased, neglected or enslaved. From such a position one could attempt to reaffirm and renew Marxism. Those who earlier had engaged with Gramsci, even if in a rudimentary fashion, could refer to a communist intellectual who was well-known far beyond the communist fold and with whom something different could be argued, in particular a critique of dogmatism and State socialism. I became interested in Gramsci at the same time as the debate was taking place in the KPÖ. The first book I read about him was *The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci*, by Perry Anderson, which appeared in German in 1979.<sup>7</sup> Gramsci's books became increasingly plentiful in German-speaking countries in the following years. However the *Prison Notebooks* were not published by the Argument-Verlag until between 1991 and 1999. Thus up to the end of the 1990s the understanding of Gramsci remained rudimentary – there was more intuition at work than knowledge. Yet even intuition raised some issues. I would say that Gramsci became an instrument in the ideological debate. Gramsci was a Shibboleth: anyone referring to him was placing himself or herself within a very particular tradition of thought. Of course alternative readings of Gramsci that led back to orthodoxy were available as well, such as that of the late Domenico Losurdo. But all this became known quite rapidly. And also significant was the fact that the Italian *Rifondazione Comunista* party provided the paradigm of a newly-constituted party which at least in part defined itself as being in the

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<sup>7</sup> Perry Anderson, *Antonio Gramsci: eine kritische Würdigung*, Berlin, Olle & Wolter, 1979 [original *The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci* in “New Left Review” 1/100 (Nov.-Jan. 1976-77), pp. 5-78].

Gramscian tradition. To this extent, Gramsci was important at this time. Many have Wolfgang Fritz Haug to thank for introducing them to Gramsci's thought, but also for indicating Brecht's significance as a philosopher. And Frigga Haug led us to discover the significance of Rosa Luxemburg for a renewal of Marxism.

At a certain point I had the feeling that the discussion of Gramsci had to some extent reached saturation point, and I turned to Brecht. After Brecht I ended up with Austro-Marxism, because I reached the conclusion that the only way to understand the ideology of one's own movement is to know its theoretical traditions. My main concern was to reconstruct at what fork in the road the idea of the autonomy of a revolutionary party vis-à-vis social democracy had drifted into dogmatism. This question led me to Otto Bauer and his integral socialism, and from integral socialism to Austro-Marxism in general. Gramsci was at the beginning of the road I took, but he was one author among many.

*In 1992 the first Gramsci conference organized by the KPÖ took place in Austria. Who organized this conference? Did it play a role in the renewal process within the party?*

At that time I was a member of the leadership of the KPÖ and responsible for organizing theoretical work. The party chairman Walter Silbermayr was a politician with theoretical interests, but most of all he was occupied with finding pragmatic ways out of the KPÖ's identity crisis of the time. My endeavour in the debate with him was to exert pressure from the left, and to increase focus on theoretical questions. For this reason I suggested organizing a Gramsci congress, and we agreed to do so. However shortly thereafter, Silbermayr resigned and things played out differently. I became the secretary of the KPÖ, and Julius Mende took over responsibility for theoretical issues and also as editor of "Weg und Ziel". This was the context in which Mende organized the 1992 Gramsci conference. Mende was an artist and a cultural theorist. Therefore the conference received a cultural theory orientation and its contributions were published in a volume entitled *Cultures of resistance. Writings on Antonio Gramsci*.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Johanna Borek/Birge Krondorfer/Julius Mende (eds.), *Kulturen des Widerstands: Texte zu Antonio Gramsci*, Wien, Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1993.

*In November 2018 the KPÖ will celebrate one hundred years of existence. The reasons for celebration are however extremely limited: after a turbulent first hundred years the party is now politically as marginalized as ever. The left has been unable to exploit the global crises which after 2008 have instead led to the rise of forces on the right and to right-wing extremism. The Social Democratic Party of Austria has long since lost its historical significance, and the Greens failed to clear the 4% threshold at the last parliamentary elections in 2017. At the same time there are no signs of a project for establishing a new, broad-based, leftist party capable in the near future of counteracting the shift to the right. For this difficult and dangerous starting point, and in alignment with Otto Bauer, you have put forward the idea of an integral socialism, as an attempt to reach a synthesis between the historical tendencies within the workers' movement and involve a wide range of different social movements.<sup>9</sup> What contribution could Gramsci offer to such an integral socialism?*

What is fascinating about the idea of integral socialism is that it represents the reverse of a Leninist concept. Both Lenin and Bauer assume a historical legitimation of the reformist and the revolutionary tendencies within the workers' movement. What then later survived as a simplification, probably also intended by Lenin himself, of the eighth chapter of *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, was of course the betrayal theory. However in actual fact what Lenin says is something quite different, namely that the renunciation by social democracy of its revolutionary goals can be explained not by betrayal, but by material causes within the changed living conditions of parts of the working class. It was precisely from here that Lenin derived the need for relentless struggle by revolutionaries against continually self-renewing reformism. Otto Bauer started from the same premise. But in his book *Between Two World Wars* which appeared in 1936, two years after defeat in the short Austrian civil war, he reached the opposite conclusion. If both social democracy's reformism and communism's "revolutionism" have material causes, neither of them can simply be abolished but must be acknowledged as dimensions of any transformative strategy towards socialism. In this regard, integral socialism is an important concept: it shows that attempting to explain differences in the

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<sup>9</sup> Walter Baier, *Integraler Sozialismus und radikale Demokratie*, in: Walter Baier/Lisbeth N. Tralori/Derek Weber (eds.), *Otto Bauer und der Austromarxismus*, Wien, Karl Dietz Verlag, 2008, pp. 17-31.

workers' movement by the mistakes of their leaders is sterile and that these differences should be understood rather as the expression of a contradictory class situation. What Bauer had in mind and what he indicated as integral socialism, was a higher synthesis of revolutionary and reformist socialism. That is a fruitful concept but it needs to be expanded. In today's social and political landscape integration cannot be limited to the two historical tendencies of the workers' movement. Integral socialism implies a plurality, understood as the mark of a revolutionary project of transformation. And how can we imagine this plurality? I use Gramsci's concept of the historical bloc, namely a goal-oriented political will, which is formed out of socially and ideologically diverse historical tendencies anchored to the material reality of society and production relations. For me, that is the nucleus of Gramsci's idea of historical materialism. A political party would be the subjective expression of such a historical bloc. I believe that in this way it is possible to imagine the founding of a radical revolutionary party. It would also define the place of Marxism within the framework of such a new conception of a socialist integral movement. In this respect, the concept of integral socialism includes much of Gramsci.

*Translation by* Chris Dennis

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<sup>10</sup> [We here list only books by Bauer referred to in the interview – editorial note]