CHAPTER 8

The Spectre of Fascism

1 Harbingers of Fascism

A critical assessment of Bauer’s theory of fascism is only understandable in its historical and political context. It is important to remember that since the beginning of the First Republic, the fascist movement was split into two wings fighting each other with increasing vehemence: Austrofascism, also known as ‘black’ fascism, and National Socialism, also known as ‘brown’ fascism.¹

From the mid-1920s onward, the two groups shared the following aims: exclusion of the Social-Democratic Party from the political stage, abolishment of the social gains of the working class, and replacement of the bourgeois democratic political order with a fascist dictatorship. Both movements had a similar social base – in 1929, it mainly consisted of the peasantry, the intelligentsia, declassed officers, and aristocratic landowners. As the economic crisis dawned, the impoverished petty bourgeoisie, industrial workers, the unemployed, and students joined the factions. Austrofascism and National Socialism were primarily divided over their respective attitudes towards the Catholic Church and their foreign policies. In the Heimwehr (Home Defence, a far right paramilitary organisation), which was led by imperial officers, clerical tendencies prevailed. The National Socialists, in contrast, adhered to the slogan, ‘Away from Rome!’ and pinned their hopes on Hitler’s Germany.² The political and economic foundations of the two varieties of fascism also differed. In Austria, on the one side, it consisted of the Heimwehr, backed by the church, aristocratic landowners, and big capital. On the other, there were the bourgeois parties. Outside of this balance of forces were the National Socialists.

All historical sources confirm that the Austrian Nazi party, the so-called German National-Socialist Workers’ Party (DNSAP), did not become a mass move-

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¹ Austrian authors, such as Gerhard Botz, Ernst Hanisch, Anton Pelinka, and Erich Zöllner, have extensively researched their inception and development. As such, we will not investigate this matter too intensely. However, we should note that most Austrian historians also differentiate between the two different varieties of fascism. Francis L. Carsten, meanwhile, offers an opposing view. Beside the National-Socialist movement, he argues, there were two different trends within the Heimwehr: German nationalist and authoritarian fascist. See Carsten 1982, p. 190.

² Compare Braunthal 1967, p. 403.
ment or exert any significant influence upon political life before Hitler’s annexation of Austria on 11 March 1938.\(^3\) Notably, the National-Socialist movement in Austria was never strong enough to exist independently. Until 1926, it hid under the wings of the Greater German People’s Party, and on 29 August 1926, it changed its name to National-Socialist German Workers’ Party and was incorporated into the structures of its German sister party, Hitler’s NSDAP. Hence, the word ‘fascism’ did not carry the same weight in Austria as it did in Germany. It stood for the Austrian clerical variety of fascism known as Austrofascism and the political power held by the Heimwehr and politicians from the Christian Social and Greater German camps allied to it – i.e. an authoritarian rule rather than the totalitarian rule in Germany.

How do we explain the success of this paramilitary organisation, and how did it manage to seize power? Bauer offered thorough explanations in his insightful analysis of fascism. Before any further discussion can take place, it is important to identify some key facts of Austrian political life from 1927–34 that are linked to his position as an author of the SDAP’s political line.

When the bourgeois coalition government ruled from 1920–9, the Social Democrats were an important oppositional movement. After the July 1927 events, they were pushed onto the defensive. Members of the SDAP bureaucracy, who were so content with economic reforms and electoral successes that they failed to notice the party’s weaknesses, were chiefly to blame for the ineffectiveness of Social-Democratic politics. The Schutzbund also lost touch with the masses and gradually turned into a bureaucratic organisation – a development that the leader of the workers’ detachments, General Theodor Körner, had cautioned against.

In the autumn of 1927, all Heimwehr forces united into a single organisation. In 1927, Ignaz Seipel – whose foremost aim was to destroy the democratic republic and Social-Democratic movement in order to establish an authoritarian corporative state (Ständestaat) in its ruins – asked the Heimwehr for aid. On 16 July 1929, Seipel held a speech at Tubingen University, exposing the vulnerability of the state’s parliamentary structures and glorifying the Heimwehr as defenders of the state against the power of political parties. From 1927–30, the number of Heimwehr members rose from 10,000 to 350,000. Most of

\(^3\) Brautenthal concurs with this. According to him, there was no danger of Nazism flooding Austria in the early 1930s. Unlike the case in Germany, the National-Socialist movement had no hopes of broad support in Austria. The big capitalists sided with the Heimwehr in the struggle against brown fascism. The Catholic part of the petty bourgeoisie and the peasants, who were under the influence of the church and loyal to the Christian Social Party, were not very susceptible to National-Socialist slogans. Compare Brautenthal 1967, p. 404.
them were peasants. However, members of different social classes and political parties were also among them – for instance, sections of the working class tied to the Christian Social Party, the Jewish bourgeoisie, radical anti-Semites, proponents and opponents of an annexation to Germany, and Christian Social and Greater German party members.

In the late 1920s, the Heimwehr became a political force and mass movement. When several unions joined – in 1929, for instance, 100,000 members of the Austrian Peasant Association and 250,000 members of the Austrian Trade Association – it founded its own Association of Independent Trade Unions. Since the Social-Democratic Free Unions (SFG) recognised the fascist trade unions, its own ranks diminished rapidly as former members began to join the fascist unions *en masse* – until 1933, the number of its members declined by half. From 1928–9, the ranks of the Heimwehr swelled, and it enjoyed military and financial support from Mussolini and Austrian finance capital. It staged marches and demonstrations largely in Tyrol and Styria, which claimed many casualties – e.g. 12 November 1928 in Innsbruck, 18 July 1929 in St. Lorenzen, and 20 August 1929 in Vösendorf. The leader of the Styrian section of the Heimwehr, W. Pfirmer, openly called for the destruction of parliamentary democracy and the creation of an ‘anti-Marxist coalition.’ At the time, Bauer and Renner still underestimated the role and importance of the Heimwehr. At the 1929 party congress, Bauer denied that the Heimwehr was an independent political force, as he believed it to be a tool of the bourgeois parties. In the ranks of the SDAP, Leichter was the only one to take to the pages of *Der Kampf* to warn of the acute danger. He pointed out that the economic crisis was driving the workers and petty

4 See Wandruszka 1954, pp. 362–3.
5 See Schöpfer 1929, p. 1033.
6 From 1922–32, many members of the Social-Democratic party and Social-Democratic Free Unions joined the ranks of the fascist groups. The available data proves that this process was slower in parties that were more effective at spreading illusions about their own strength to the masses. Data cited from Leichter 1964, p. 31.

| Year | SDAP members | SFG members |
|------|--------------|-------------|
| 1922 | 553,000      | 1,080,000   |
| 1929 | 718,000      | 737,000     |
| 1930 | 698,000      | 655,000     |
| 1932 | 649,000      | 520,000     |

7 See Oberkofler 1979, p. 210.
bourgeoisie into the arms of the fascists, who intended to bring about their dictatorship at all costs.\(^8\)

Seipel’s ‘strongman’ politics led to another governmental crisis.\(^9\) In Johann Schober’s government (26 September 1919–25 September 1930), the personal and ideological influence of the Heimwehr was very weak as the new chancellor proved to be, against all expectations, a defender of the democratic foundations of the state. He did not consider the Heimwehr as having the potential to seize power. While the Heimwehr was very disappointed with his politics, the Social Democrats gained new hope. In 1929, they began to co-operate with Johann Schober’s government on an amendment to the constitution that Ernst Streeruwitz’s cabinet had initiated. The new draft was introduced to parliament on 18 October 1929. As Renner rightly pointed out, it was an attempt to reintroduce emergency laws against the socialists.\(^10\) Bauer allowed himself to be duped, believing the law was to be a barrier against the fascisation of the country. Naturally, the church and Christian Social Party had different hopes for the amendment entirely: they expected that it would strengthen the power of the Federal President and transform the Federal Assembly into an assembly representing the estates (\textit{Stände}). The Heimwehr also supported the amendment, anticipating that it would increase the authority of the state and finally allow it to settle scores with Social Democracy.\(^11\)

In 1930, the fascist programme ratified at the meeting in Korneuburg on 18 May 1930 was consolidated. Othmar Spann, a philosopher and professor at Vienna University, provided its philosophical formula, the ‘oath of Korneuburg’. Its principles included the rejection of democracy as a threat to culture and the demand for a hierarchical power structure. The ‘oath of Korneuburg’ was an early warning for the planned abolition of parliamentarism, seizure of power, and creation of an authoritarian state modelled on the principles of Italian Fascism. The ambivalent attitude of the Christian Social Party toward Heimwehr activities at the time is worthy of attention. The right wing of the party supported the ideology expressed in the ‘oath of Korneuburg’, while

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8 See Pelinka 1984, p. 56.
9 Seipel did not agree to an amnesty for the participants in the riots of 15 July 1927, which led to many Catholics leaving the church in protest. In 1927 alone, 21,857 Catholics abandoned the church, and in 1929, Seipel had to resign as chancellor. Compare Leichter 1964, p. 62.
10 Renner 1965, p. 301.
11 The new constitution strengthened the position of the federal president and gave the government the right to pass emergency decrees. On 15 March 1933, Dollfuss made use of this right, dissolving parliament and applying ‘full war and industrial authorisation’ dating back to 1917.
the more left-leaning leaders of Leopold Kunschak’s Christian trade unions wanted to defend democracy.¹²

A brief digression before we assess the standpoint of the Christian Socials. In the early 1930s, the Heimwehr was a significant but not decisive state power. The Social Democrats made up the parliamentary majority, and the government formed by delegates of the Christian Socials, the Heimwehr, and the Landbund had only received one more vote. An alliance between the Christian Social and Social-Democratic parties to avert the threat of Austrofascism was theoretically possible. However, it is fair to say without engaging in speculations that co-operation between clerical and democratic forces was not a realistic proposition in Austria, not just on the basis of their programmatic and political differences. The increasing influence of the Heimwehr in the Christian Social Party was far more important. As evidenced by the rapprochement of the Christian Socials and Heimwehr after the elections of 9 September 1930, pro-fascist tendencies gradually prevailed in this party. One of the ministers of Karl Vaugoin’s minority government, Ernst Rüdiger Starmhemberg, became the leader of the Heimwehr. This election – the last freely held general election of the First Republic – granted the Heimwehr a partial success: it only received eight seats in parliament.¹³ Even so, this signified a shift of forces in the bourgeois camp. The Christian Social Party was losing its influence to the Heimwehr, while the SDAP, which had scored an electoral success, had ostensibly consolidated its power – after all, it had become the strongest party in parliament for the first time since 1919. However, the election victory blinded the SDAP to its own critical state. The ideology that held it together had lost strength. The divide between the party leadership and factions, trade unions, and groups of intellectuals was expanding. In light of the fascists’ growing power, the masses’

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¹² In the Christian Social Party, the democratic current (represented by the chair of the Christian trade-union movement, Leopold Kunschak) faced anti-democratic traditions (Seipel, Vaugoin, Dollfuss). From 1900 onward, nationalist thinking prevailed. It emphasised the superiority of Germans in Austria and anti-Marxism. These aspects were also dominant in the Christian Social Party’s programmes of 1923, 1926 and 1928. They were expressions of the German character of the party and the close relationship between Austria and the German Reich. See Berchtold 1967, in Documents, Programmes, Protocols, pp. 356–63; Lüer 1987; and Simon 1984b, p. 122.

¹³ In the elections, the Social Democrats won 72 mandates (41 percent of votes), the Christian Socials 66 mandates (36 percent), the Greater Germans and Landbund 19 mandates (12 percent), and the Heimwehr 8 mandates (6 percent). It was also characteristic that the Nazi party, having only received 100,000 votes (3 percent) did not manage to secure a parliamentary seat, while the National Socialists in Germany won 107 mandates (18.5 percent) in the elections of 14 September 1930. See Zöllner 1979.
willingness to accept the party leaders’ purely defensive administration was waning. On Bauer’s recommendation, the SDAP remained in opposition despite its election victory.

Given the escalating economic crisis from 1931–2, Otto Ender’s government attempted to save the economic situation by agreeing on a tariff union with Germany – yet this was never actualised due to resistance from France and the Little Entente. As the Christian Social and Greater German coalition fell apart, both the Heimwehr and NSDAP took advantage of the intensifying economic and political crisis. Although a putsch attempt by the Styrian commander of the Heimwehr, Walter Pfirmer, failed on 13 September 1931, the perpetrators were not brought to justice. It was a sign that the balance of forces within the Heimwehr was changing: the conservative-legitimist trend prevailed over the nationalist, and its exponent, Emil Fey, was appointed vice chancellor of the government. In the regional elections on 24 April 1932, the National Socialists scored their first electoral success, winning 336,000 votes (17.4 percent) at the expense of the Christian Social Party. The Social Democrats still expected to win over the working masses, petty bourgeoisie and unemployed, as they falsely believed that impoverishment and hardship were revolutionising factors (Kautsky had already warned against this during World War I). In reality, unemployment led to resignation and drove the affected into the arms of fascists of both factions. Nazi propaganda skilfully exploited this phenomenon by declaring Germany as the country where an economic miracle had occurred. If one considers the methods that Bauer forced on the party at the time – remaining in opposition, constantly attacking Karl Buresch’s government and demanding elections – then it is fair to wonder, as Leser does, how a party leadership actively weakening the shaky foundations of the bourgeois state and unwilling to use force against the fascists intended to save democracy. Bauer only recognised the fact that the Social Democrats’ position had been a tactical error, caused by the leaders’ stubborn clinging to Austromarxist theory, in the wake of the total defeat of democracy in 1934. Earlier, at the party congress in the autumn of 1932, he finally became aware of the fascist peril, stating the following:

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14 In his commentary on the election results of 24 April 1932, Bauer arrived at the wrong conclusion regarding the growing fascist trend. He believed the Social Democrats could win the petty-bourgeois masses that the crisis had put at risk for socialism. See Bauer 1932, p. 192. As Leser points out in Leser 1968, p. 457, Bauer did not realise that the petty-bourgeois masses did not wish for socialist equality and a classless society, but – on the contrary – rescuing from being declassed. They wanted to preserve their position in society at the price of general inequality of classes.

15 Compare Leser 1968, p. 458.
The question today is not one of capitalism or socialism ... [R]ight now, we are facing a different question entirely. Surrounded by reactionary states – fascism in the south, south-east, east, and west – it is the big, but also glorious, task of the Austrian proletariat to preserve the country as an island of democratic freedom.16

Our translation

This aspiration would soon die when Dollfuss introduced the corporative state on 1 May 1934 (as will be further explained in the fourth section). Austria was then subjected to changes that paved the way for Hitler's annexation, even if this was not done consciously or intentionally. In the year 1931, Schober and Curtius signed the draft for a tariffs union between Austria and Germany; however, as mentioned earlier, international political factors prevented this from being put into practice. Another step which helped create the conditions for the annexation was the agreement signed between the Greater German People's Party and the Austrian section of the NSDAP in 1933 – a rude awakening for left and right groups alike. In the autumn of that year, the leadership of the SDAP and SFG adopted a resolution on defending Austria against Nazism. For the same purpose, the Christian Social Party and Heimwehr jointly formed the Fatherland Front on 20 April 1933 (it became a legal party in 1934). Kunschak identified the growing significance of brown fascism and impending civil war. In a speech held at the Vienna local council on 9 February 1934, he appealed to the SDAP leaders to join forces to defend the country against National Socialism. Alas, his call fell on deaf ears.17 The third and fourth sections of this chapter are dedicated to the consequences of the approaches of Bauer and the other SDAP leaders.

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16 ‘Das Problem steht heute nicht zwischen Kapitalismus und Sozialismus; (…) sondern im Augenblick stehen wir hier vor einer ganz anderen Frage. Umzingelt von den reaktionären Staaten rings um uns, vom Faschismus im Süden, Südosten, im Osten und im Westen ist es die ungeheuer große, aber auch ungeheuer ruhmvolle Aufgabe des österreichischen Proletariats hier eine Insel demokratischer Freiheit zu erhalten’ – SDAP 1932, p. 39, in Documents, Programmes, Protocols.

17 Shortly after, on 25 July 1934, Chancellor Dollfuss was killed during a failed Nazi putsch attempt. After his death, Schuschnigg’s government arrested numerous Nazis, yet this was only an ostensible defeat for National Socialism. Nazi propaganda increased, Nazis employed in the police or judiciary joined the Fatherland Front, anti-Semitic members of the Christian Social Party still held Nazi sympathies, and members of the government and Heimwehr maintained their secret contacts to the Nazis. See Hindels 1981, p. 35.
European history bears the imprints of two varieties of fascism in particular: German National Socialism and Italian Fascism, which relevant literature refers to as classical fascism. Fascist movements with specifically national characteristics also emerged in other countries, such as Bulgaria, Romania, Portugal, Spain, France, Hungary and Austria. As Czubiński aptly observed, the fascist parties ‘grew fastest in countries threatened by revolutionary upheaval, where the governing social forces were already too weak to preserve the old order and revolutionary forces were too weak to seize power and establish a new social order’. There is no doubt that the weakness of the Social-Democratic parties was one of the factors that benefitted the fascists in their rise to power. In most cases, these parties downplayed the threat of fascism and did not devise any effective strategy for combating fascist reaction.

In the 1920s and 30s, enlightened scholars, publicists, and some politicians were conscious of the danger emanating from fascism and the power it held – in contrast to political parties, whether proletarian or bourgeois. The most serious interpretations of the phenomenon emerged from three circles: bourgeois intellectuals, Marxist thinkers, and fascists themselves. In general, they agreed on only two impressions: they deemed fascism to be a result of social changes in European society resulting from the war and its long-term consequences, such as the economic and moral crisis. Nobody had doubts about its anti-liberal, anti-democratic, anti-socialist, anti-pacifist and nationalist nature, nor was there any controversy as to its primary objectives: the destruction of democracy and the workers’ movement. A wide range of answers and explanations was offered with respect to other questions: What social forces does fascism represent? Can one speak of fascism in a general sense, or must every strain of fascism be assessed separately as a local, national phenomenon? What social forces and mechanisms allowed fascism to seize power? What is fascism as a mass movement, and what is it as a system of government? How does fascist rule compare to other totalitarian and authoritarian regimes? It is not our intention to examine all of these queries in detail – Ernst Nolte and Renzo de Felice, as well as a number of Polish authors, have accomplished this thoroughly. Because of

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18 Czubiński 1985, p. 7.
19 See Nolte 1967; De Felice 1977; Czubiński 1985; Filipiak 1985; and Zmierczak 1988. De Felice identifies three basic interpretations of fascism: (1) fascism as a moral disease taking hold of Europe (an expression of moral values being thrown into crisis), thus understood by Croces, Meinecke, Ritter, and Mann; (2) fascism as a logical and inevitable consequence of the historical development of some countries, thus understood by Vermeil,
the special place occupied by Bauer’s analysis in the Marxist bloc, however, we cannot refrain from outlining the differences between Communist and Social-Democratic views of fascism. Within the framework of our observations, these differences are merely comparative rather than constitutive – the reader will therefore find a brief explanation in the footnote.20

McGovern and Viereck; (3) fascism as a product of capitalist society and anti-proletarian reaction, thus understood by authors from Comintern circles, e.g. Thalheimer, Labriola, Dobb, Baran, Löwenthal, Sweezy, and at the time Bauer. Compare De Felice 1977, pp. 37–82.

Two brief remarks before we cite the main Communist and Social-Democratic assessments of fascism in the 1920s and 30s. Firstly, this is a very rough outline that only serves to demonstrate the essential characteristics of both interpretations. More thorough and complex readings of fascism can be found in both camps. Secondly, the scientific value of these interpretations is of no interest to us in this context. In their analyses of fascism, the Communists – Dimitrov, Radek, Koszucka, Zetkin, Zinoviev, and others – looked mainly at two social classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. When they did mention the petty bourgeoisie, it was of lesser significance. In the 1920s, they regarded fascism as a counter-revolutionary threat, a method of the bourgeoisie to defend itself against the revolutionary danger emanating from the proletariat. Their position only marginally changed in the course of the 1930s. When identifying the social carriers of fascism, they no longer spoke of the bourgeoisie as a whole, but specifically singled out the finance oligarchy, believing that the destruction of the workers’ movement was merely its short-term objective – in the long-term, it was planning another imperialist war and a new division of the world. Dimitrov’s definition of fascism, as formulated at the 13th enlarged plenum of the executive committee of the Comintern and reiterated at the eighth congress in Moscow in August 1935, would be pivotal for the Communists for years to come. According to this definition, which persisted even after World War II, fascism was the ‘open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital’ – see Dimitrov 1935. The Communists did not shy away from accusing the Social Democrats of periphrastically assisting fascism or even directly collaborating with it. Until 1935, they bandied the phrase ‘social fascism’ based on the ‘theory of fascism’ coined in 1928, against the Social Democrats. It nipped in the bud any attempts to build a united anti-fascist front. In their attacks against parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy, the Communists even went so far as to equate democracy with fascist dictatorship. Dokumenty z historii III Międzynarodówki komunistycznej, in Documents, Programmes, Protocols, pp. 275–465; compare Sobolev et al. 1971.

The Social Democrats’ attitude towards fascism in that period was more complex than the Communist position because many different interpretations coexisted within Social Democracy. See e.g. Deutsch 1926; Hilferding 1932; Breitscheid 1977; Rosenberg 1934; Bauer 1976p and 1939. It is, however, possible to outline the basic premises of the Social-Democratic interpretations. Unlike the Communists, the Social Democrats regarded the petty bourgeoisie and declasse members of all social layers and classes as the social
In the socialist camp, the Austromarxists Deutsch, Renner, Ellenbogen, Leichter, Max Adler and Bauer decisively contributed to investigating the fascist anomaly. For the sake of precision, we hasten to clarify that they only began to excel in this area in the 1930s, as before that time, the Austrians failed to recognise the fascist threat for what it was. According to Botz, two beliefs that were widespread in the Austrian Social-Democratic movement further hampered their analysis. Many Social Democrats dismissed the fascist movements as armed gang activities, painting the perpetrators as thugs who served the capitalists as foot soldiers against the working class; others believed that the government had voluntarily handed power to the fascists. The 1920s literature of Deutsch and Braunthal, in addition to Renner’s postwar writings, served to reinforce this perspective.

Bauer’s dissertations from the 1920s contained more profound theses on the rise of fascism than most Austrian socialist texts. However, one can only speak of mature theories of fascism with respect to his 1930s writings. In a complex and meticulous manner, Zwischen zwei Weltkriegen (Between Two World Wars, 1936) and Die illegale Partei (The Illegal Party, posthumously published in 1939) depict fascism’s genesis, social base, and mechanisms of seizing power, as well as investigating the social forces which facilitated a fascist dictatorship in Italy. What is more, the author differentiated between fascism as a mass movement and fascism as a form of rule. Bauer interpreted fascism as a product of economic crisis and the consequences of war in Europe. Even so, he did not go so far as to consider it a historical necessity or inevitable developmental tendency in all capitalist countries.

21 Compare Botz 1980, p. 178.
22 See Deutsch 1926; Braunthal 1922; Renner 1932, pp. 89–90; Renner 1953, p. 78.
23 He claimed, for instance, that there could be no talk of fascism in Poland, Bulgaria and
immensely popular – particularly in Italy and Germany – were political rather than economic: the Italians were disgruntled by the fact that British, French and American capitalism had deprived the country of its war loot. The Germans were bitter over the lost war and unjust Treaty of Versailles, and the parliamentary democratic system in both countries was immature and fragile. Bauer also thought that the self-inflicted defeat of the German revolution and splitting of the workers’ movement had paved the way for fascism. A particularly important aspect of his understanding was that he thought of fascism as a supranational phenomenon, even if the rhetoric contained in his texts provoked a lot of misunderstanding.\textsuperscript{24} He qualified his assessment by linking it to historical reality and the national varieties of fascism, especially Austromarxism. Rather than being a scholarly construct, Bauer’s comprehensions of fascism were that of an active politician.\textsuperscript{25} They were deeply rooted in the experience of the international, but especially the German, workers’ movement, and were intended as a weapon in the anti-fascist struggle. It would be a mistake to look at them as a coherent whole, considering that they evolved along with the European political situation and the workers’ movement itself. According to Pelinka, Bauer’s interpretations contain three different – if overlapping – theories of fascism reflecting three periods in the European and Austrian workers’ movement.\textsuperscript{26}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} Bauer frequently used the term ‘fascism’ without specifying whether he meant German or Italian fascism.
\item \textsuperscript{25} This resulted in contradictions between the three theories. Hanisch demonstrated this in Hanisch 1974.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Pelinka depicts the three phases of Bauer’s theory of fascism as corresponding to three chapters in the history of Austrian Social Democracy. Compare Pelinka 1985, p. 26. In contrast, Botz identifies six distinct theories of fascism in Bauer’s writings – a view I do not share: (1) an early theory based on Bonapartism (1923); (2) a simplified theory of Bonapartism; (3) the fascism theory of the Linz programme (1926); (4) the assessment of Austrofascism; (5) an expanded theory of Bonapartism (1936); and (6) fascism theory as a theory of imperialism. See Botz 1985, p. 16i. In my view, the ‘three theories’ model is more accurate on two counts. First, because in the 1920s, the Bonapartism model only served Bauer as an aid to explain the victory of fascism; later, it remained an integral component of his theory, which he consistently developed until 1936. Second, one can hardly call the references to the social basis of fascism and strategy of ‘defensive violence’ in the Linz programme, which was drafted by Bauer, a theory.
\end{itemize}
1. A theory of fascism drawing on the notion of Bonapartism in light of the situation in Europe after the victory of fascist regimes and concurrent defeat of Social Democracy (1924–36);

2. A theory of Austrofascism that settled scores with the corporative state (*Ständestaat*) and Dollfuss's and Schuschnigg's authoritarian governments from the point of view of Social Democracy (1934–8);

3. A theory of fascism drawing on imperialism theory and linked to the socialist movement's anti-fascist struggle in the face of looming war (1939).

Two pressing questions emerge. Firstly, do these theories contain elements that link them together – and if so, what are they? Secondly, how do they differ from each other? We shall precede further analysis with a brief statement: only Bauer's insights into the ideology and social base of fascism remained consistent in his three aforementioned theories, especially in the first and second. They differed in the most important aspects when explaining the phenomenon of fascism. In the first and second theories, sociological, political, and historical components prevailed. In the third, the emphasis shifted to economics.

### 2.1 Fascism Theory Based on the Notion of Bonapartism

The theory put forward in the chapter, 'Fascism', in *Between Two World Wars* – which went on to become Bauer's best-known text on fascism when published separately – was his first attempt at a thorough explanation of fascism. Elements of this were already present in the author's earlier essay, *Gleichgewicht der Klassenkräfte* (*Balance of Class Forces*), and in the Linz programme of 1926. In 'Fascism', he outlined the processes that provided fertile ground for fascism, the character of its ideology, its social base, and its social and political consequences. However, the two most fundamental aspects were: firstly, his investigation of the social forces and mechanisms that allowed fascism to usurp power from the republicans; secondly, the question as to how fascism as a mass movement differs from fascism in power, and the differences between the dominant and the ruling class within this system. We will refer to this theory as the theory of Bonapartism because it was based on the sociological scheme from Marx’s *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852).\(^\text{27}\)

Bauer clearly differentiated between the fascist movement and fascist rule. The integral element in his analysis of fascism's genesis was his identification of the sociological factors that allowed fascism to merge divergent social interests

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\(^{27}\) Botz also used this term in the aforementioned articles.
into one apparently unified force. In *Between Two World Wars*, he demonstrated that the birth of fascism was the result of a synthesis of three different, yet coherent, social processes:

1. The creation of fascist militias from declassed former war combatants. In the main, they were members of the intelligentsia and officers. The war had torn them away from their quiet lives, confined them to the margins of civil society, and imbued them with a militaristic and anti-democratic ideology. Hoping that they would regain the posts and social prestige they held during the war, they came out in favour of militaristic nationalism.

2. The pauperisation of a majority of the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry due to the economic crisis. From these layers, disenchanted with the government and bourgeois democratic parties, emerged a nationalist, petty-bourgeois ideology. They were the social basis of fascism as a mass movement, yet the movement could only grow with support from the capitalist class.

3. Factual constraints: the economic crisis affected the capitalists’ profits, which could only grow through increased exploitation. Hence, the capitalists saw themselves as forced to seek fascist assistance against the working class. In order to increase exploitation to satisfying levels, parliamentary democracy would have to be destroyed and the trade unions and workers’ organisations dissolved.28

For Bauer, these processes led to the emergence of an eclectic fascist ideology rooted in German Romanticism, the writings of Vilfredo Pareto and George Sorel, and race theorists. It denied its class character and presented itself as speaking for the entire nation. It made its supporters believe that they were participating in a general revolution that would meet whatever hopes and expectations the respective social groups attached to it. It was militaristic (based on discipline and the cult of the *Führer*), nationalist (glorifying one’s own nation and race), anti-democratic (breaking with the sovereignty of the people and formal democracy), but especially anti-bourgeois (opposed to bourgeois and civic values, and the bourgeois way of life in terms of freedom, individualism and pluralism). Bauer rightly accentuated two characteristics of this ideology: its ability to assume a national colouration (in Germany, it merged with racism and anti-Semitism, in Austria with clericalism, and in Italy with anti-rationalism), and its hostility towards the proletariat and monopoly capital,

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28 A similar understanding can be found in a text by the Italian Social Democrat Filippo Turati, *Fascismo, Socialismo, Democrazia* (1928). Compare De Felize 1977, p. 197.
which reflected the social and political condition of the middle classes. It directed its attacks particularly against the workers. Because of their class solidarity and organisation, Bauer argued, workers were better equipped to defend themselves against the effects of economic crisis than the petty bourgeoisie. Its psychological basis was the middle classes’ fear of being declassed and proletarianised. According to Bauer, the fascist ideology prevailed in countries with a weak parliamentary tradition, an unstable capitalist economy, and a social structure subject to unexpected fluctuations in the wake of war and revolution.

The ideology of fascism was by no means the principle focus of Bauer’s writings. He was far more interested in the attitudes of different social groups and classes towards fascism – and, to be precise, the question of which social forces fascism relied on to gain momentum prior to assuming power. Bauer pointed out that the big capitalists and aristocrats felt nothing but contempt for Hitler and rejected the fascist ideology and movement. Nor did the bourgeoisie convert to National Socialism. Initially, it did not even consider that the movement might seize power; rather, it viewed it as a useful tool to break the resistance of the working class against its own deflationary politics and attacks on social and political legislation, as well as curb the influence of the workers’ organisations and trade unions. The bourgeoisie naively imagined that it could effortlessly exclude fascism from the political stage once it had engaged with it in order to stabilise bourgeois political and economic rule. However, it turned out to be the other way round, as the ‘third force’ held the bourgeoisie captive instead. Analysing the social consistency of the fascist movements, Bauer concluded that fascism, while winning support in all social groups, derived its specific strength and development from the middle classes, i.e. the petty bourgeoisie, artisans, intelligentsia, youth and bankrupted peasants. Contemporary research confirms this.29

In an article entitled ‘Der 24. April 1932’, Bauer wrote after the 1932 elections that the cause of fascism was a rebellion of the petty bourgeoisie, yet he did

29 Research conducted by Bendix proves that in 1921, 61.6 percent of the members of the fascist party came from the middle classes. In Germany in 1933, members of the middle classes also prevailed in Hitler’s party. See Bendix 1966, pp. 596–609. The relationship between fascism and the middle classes is one of the key questions in sociological and historical literature on fascism. The following authors focused on the role of the middle class: Harold Lasswell, David Joseph Sapoross, Sven Ronulf, Talcott Parsons, Nathaniel Preston, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Luigi Salvorelli. Compare De Felice 1977, p. 129. Compare also Saage’s depiction of the relationship between Nazism and the middle classes in Saage 1977, chapters 5 and 6.
not go so far as to credit the middle class as an independent political force. Rather, he thought of it as a mere instrument in the hands of the fascists and de facto big capital. The elite of the fascist party hailed from the grande bourgeoisie and landowners, whose interests opposed those of the middle classes. Bauer was right in asserting that the fascist dictatorship emancipated itself from the fascist movement the moment it seized power, which occurred at the expense of the ambitions of the middle classes. His other conclusion was no less accurate: Social Democracy in power had disappointed the hopes of many, and during the period prior to fascism taking full control, it was unable to use the discontent and revolutionary potential of the middle classes to reinvigorate itself. The programmes of the workers’ parties had insufficiently taken into account the interests of the middle classes – the SDAP programmes of the 1920s came too late in this respect. Because of this misstep, the left-leaning sections of these classes deserted in favour of fascism.

The main issue that preoccupied Bauer in his works on fascism from 1924–36 was the mechanism by which fascism could obtain dominance. In order to discern it, he had to address a couple of questions. First, in what way did the rebellion of the middle classes lead to the introduction of fascist dictatorships? Second, which social forces de facto allowed the fascist movements to assume power and consolidate their rule? Bauer was not the only one to make use of Marx’s theory of Bonapartism as a blueprint to answer these questions. August Thalheimer, then a member of the Communist Party of Germany (Opposition), and Leon Trotsky employed much the same mode of explanation, and even non-Marxist theorists such as Ernst Fraenkel, Franz Neumann, Friedrich Pollock, Alfred Sohn-Rethel, Timothy Mason and Gert Schäfer referred to Marx’s theory of Bonapartism in their work on fascism. This theory provoked numerous controversies amongst socialists and did not find the approval of Social-Democratic parties.

30 In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx analysed the historical sources and social content of Bonapartism. For him, the historically conditioned class constellation of French society provided the prerequisites for Bonaparte’s coup. The most valuable achievement of Marx’s analysis was not so much that he identified the actual social basis (the peasantry whose land had been divided into parcels) and class content of Bonapartism (the economic power of the finance oligarchy), but his emphasis on the socio-political balance of forces that gave rise to Bonapartism: a bourgeoisie that aimed to protect its economic interests and a proletariat that was unable to gain, let alone maintain, power in the state in light of the crisis. See Marx 1852.

31 The critical reader should not fail to notice that Bauer’s and Thalheimer’s analyses – and, to a lesser extent, Trotsky’s – rather mechanically applied Marx’s conclusions to
The basic premise of Bauer’s interpretation of fascism as Bonapartism, even during the year of 1924, was as follows: fascism was not a form of rule by the propertied classes that one could explain through the imperialist developmental stage of capitalism. Rather, an analogy could be drawn between fascism’s seizure of power in both Italy and Germany and Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte’s coup of 1851, to which all social classes subordinated themselves due to the balance of class forces at the time. According to Bauer, the comparable conditions between Germany and Italy resulted from economic crisis. In these countries, a relative equilibrium of class forces had emerged that was politically and socially specific, i.e. based on the weakness of both main classes in capitalist society – the bourgeoisie and proletariat.\(^{32}\) On one side, the crisis-shaken bourgeois class had lost the support of the middle classes, who felt disenchanted with bourgeois democracy. Hence, it was also too frail to subordinate the working class and rule the state by democratic means. It was, however, strong enough to arm fascist militias as their auxiliary troops. On the other side, there was the working class, which was still too weak to initiate the socialist revolution and seize power. Because of their weakness, both classes were unable to act independently, which created fertile ground for a fascist victory. In the meantime, fascism matured and, unlike the old classes, was able to maintain the balance of class forces. The only prerequisite for its assumption of rule in the state was the seizure of executive power and enforcement of a dictatorship over all classes.

In 1924, Bauer explained the complex relationship between the bourgeoisie and fascism by additionally differentiating between the political and economic power of the bourgeois class. At the time, he still held the simplistic idea that the bourgeoisie had voluntarily handed power to the fascists in order to defend fascism; Marx would have most certainly disapproved of this methodology. The positive side was their effort to explain fascism in relation to the social and political structure of capitalist society at the time and identify their contradictions. However, their attempt at applying an analysis based on free market-era capitalism to capitalism in its imperialist stage, as well as scarce consideration of the relationship between economic and political power, inevitably led to astonishing, one-sided speculation. See Thalheimer 1930; Trotsky 1971.

\(^{32}\) Note that Bauer considered the balance of class forces to be a normal state in bourgeois society – see also Saage 1977, p. 128. In addition, maintaining the balance of class forces based on the strength of the bourgeoisie and working class was, according to Bauer’s theory of a ‘state of balance of class forces’, a precondition for the further development of capitalism as a political and economic system, as well as a precondition for reformist socialism.
its interests and economic position in the face of the radicalisation of the workers’ movement. In his book, *Gleichgewicht der Klassenkräfte (The Balance of Class Forces)*, he wrote:

The Italian Fascism of 1922 is the equivalent of the French Bonapartism of 1851. In both cases, an adventurer backed by gangs of armed adventurers managed to disperse the bourgeois parliament and thus overthrow the political rule of the bourgeoisie and erect his own dictatorship over all classes. This occurred as the bourgeoisie abandoned its own political representatives and threw itself into the arms of the force that rebelled against its own state power. In exchange for its political rule, it saved its property against the proletarian threat.33

Bauer was evidently incorrect. At no point was fascism a reaction to the victories of the working class; after all, the working class had already been driven onto the defensive by the bourgeoisie in the early 1920s. In fact, the opposite was the case: the shortcomings of the workers’ movement, the hollowness of its words, and the sluggishness of its leaders drove the petty bourgeois and workers into the arms of the fascists, allowing them to build a social base for their success.34 This was not the only deficiency in Bauer’s analysis. In the aforementioned text, the author recognised that fascist Bonapartism was a specific form of counter-revolution rather than a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Yet Bauer did not take into account the role of fascist mass organisations and conflicts between the petty bourgeoisie and big bourgeoisie.35 It is important to remember that he disregarded the threat of fascism during that period, and it was in this spirit that he made his statements at the 1927 congress of the SDAP.36 His nonchalance might be ascribed to the belief

33 Der italienische Faschismus von 1922 ist das Gegenstück des französischen Bonapartist- mus von 1851. In beiden Fällen hat ein Abenteurer, auf Banden bewaffneter Abenteurer gestützt, das bürgerliche Parlament auseinanderjagen damit die politische Herrschaft das Bourgeoisie stürzen und seine Diktatur über alle Klassen aufrichten können, weil die Bourgeoisie selbst ihre politische Vertretung im Stich ließ, ihre eigene Klassenherrschaft preisgab, sich der gegen ihre eigene Staatsmacht rebellierenden Gewalt in die Arme warf um, gegen Preissgabe ihrer politischen Herrschaft ihr vom Proletariat bedrohtes Eigentum zu retten – see Bauer 1980o, p. 66.
34 Compare Heimann 1985, p. 136.
35 See Pelinka 1985, p. 60.
36 At the time, he stated: ‘one should not try to scare us with the Italian example ... The
that it would suffice for the workers to refrain from any defensive activities in order to restore social peace, as well as an underestimation of the influence of fascist ideology upon the petty-bourgeois masses and peasantry. It is not hard to agree with Kösten, who claims that Bauer’s approach to fascism, based as it was on the blueprint of Bonapartism, was not a strategy to mobilise the working class against fascism, but rather a pious hope to strengthen democratic bourgeois forces as a counterweight to fascisisation.37 It is also difficult to rationally explain how Bauer could overlook the growing influence of the Heimwehr in the Christian Social and Greater German parties. There is simply no logical explanation for why Bauer demanded in 1929 that the Schutzbund be disarmed, in the hope that this would avert the threat of fascism.

It was not until Hitler’s victory in Germany and the defeat of his own party in 1934 that Bauer revised his assessments from the late 1920s and early 1930s, developing and heightening his analyses. In 1936, he returned to his earlier theory of fascism as Bonapartism and its basic premise of a balance of class forces. He modified his standpoint in three respects: the position and role of the working class, the social and class content of fascism, and the separation between power apparatus and ruling class under fascism.

Bauer abandoned the idea that fascism was a defensive reaction of the bourgeoisie to the system’s readiness for social revolution. He conceded that it amassed power at a time when the working class was powerless. In contrast, he interpreted fascism’s successes and its support from the bourgeoisie as a result of the crisis of bourgeois hegemony, which coincided with the crisis of the workers’ movement. Bauer’s tense relationship to reformism is an interesting aspect in this. On the one hand, he accused reformism of impotence. It had proved incapable of protecting the working and middle classes from the effects of economic crisis. On the other, he gave too much weight to the bourgeoisie’s struggle against the gains of reformist socialism in attempting to explain the fascist victory. For Bauer, fascism superseded the old order because the bourgeoisie sought the help of illegal fascist squads to protect its profits dur-

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Austrian working class, which is a far greater part of our population and far more geographically concentrated than is the case in Italy, would put up much stronger resistance. In general, dictatorships – both fascist and Bolshevik – have only emerged in the agrarian states of east and south Europe. In the industrial countries, democracy has always prevailed’ – Protocol of the Social-Democratic congress 1927, in Documents, Programmes, Protocols, p. 120.

37 See Kösten 1984, p. 152.
ing economic upheaval – it could not suppress reformist socialism by means of state coercion, as it was too weak and hindered by democratic institutions.38

Bauer wrote: ‘The fascist dictatorship thus emerges as the result of a peculiar balance of class forces. On one side stands a bourgeoisie that is the master of the means of production and circulation and executive state power. However, the economic crisis has destroyed the profits of this bourgeoisie. The democratic institutions prevent the bourgeoisie from imposing its will upon the proletariat to a degree the bourgeoisie deems necessary to restore its profits. This bourgeoisie is too weak to continue enforcing its will by the same ideological means it employs to rule the masses in bourgeois democracy. The democratic legal order restricts it, and it is too weak to crush the proletariat by legal means. However, it is strong enough to bankroll a lawless, unconstitutional private army, equip it with arms, and unleash it upon the working class. Reformism and trade unions have become stronger than the bourgeoisie can tolerate. Resistance against it raising the degree of exploitation stands in the way of deflation. It can no longer be broken other than by force. Yet even though reformist socialism is being attacked because of its strength and the greatness of its successes, it is at the same time too weak to defend itself against the violence. Because it operates within the framework of the existing bourgeois democratic system, holding on to it as its battleground and source of strength, it appears like a “party of the system” to the broad, petty-bourgeois, peasant and proletarian masses – a participant and beneficiary of the same democracy that is incapable of protecting them from pauperisation by economic crisis. It is therefore not able to draw in the masses that the crisis radicalises. They flock towards its mortal enemy, fascism. The result of this balance of forces – or rather, weakness of both classes – is the victory of fascism, which crushes the working class in the service of the capitalists. However, while paid by the capitalists it gets so out of hand that the capitalists end up helping it to seize unlimited power over the whole people, including themselves’ (our translation). Original: ‘Die faschistische Diktatur entsteht so als das Resultat eines eigenartigen Gleichgewichtes der Klassenkräfte. Auf der einen Seite steht eine Bourgeoisie, die Herrin der Produktions- und der Zirkulationsmittel und der Staatsgewalt ist. Aber die Wirtschaftskrise hat die Profite dieser Bourgeoisie vernichtet. Die demokratischen Institutionen hindern die Bourgeoisie ihren Willen dem Proletariat in dem Ausmaß aufzuzwingen, das ihr zur Wiederherstellung ihrer Profite notwendig erscheint. Diese Bourgeoisie ist zu schwach um ihren Willen noch mit jenen geistigen ideologischen Mitteln durchzusetzen, durch die sie in der bürgerlichen Demokratie die Wählermassen beherrscht. Sie ist, durch die demokratische Rechtsordnung beengt, zu schwach, um das Proletariat mit gesetzlichen Mitteln, mittels ihres gesetzlichen Staatsapparates niederzuwerfen. Aber sie ist stark genug, eine gesetzlose, gesetzwidrige Privatarmee zu besolden, auszurüsten und auf die Arbeiterklasse loszulassen. Auf der anderen Seite steht eine von dem reformistischen Sozialismus und von den Gewerkschaften geführte Arbeiterklasse. Reformismus und Gewerkschaften sind stärker geworden, als es die Bourgeoisie erträgt. Ihr Widerstand gegen die Hebung des Grades der Ausbeutung steht der Deflation im Wege. Er kann nicht mehr anders, als durch Gewalt gebrochen werden. Aber wird der reformistische Sozialismus gerade um seiner Stärke wil-

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Thus, fascism was granted support as a ‘gift’ from bourgeois hands, and, once it held power, it did not intend on relinquishing it. Thereafter, fascism took specific measures. Firstly, it turned against the social base thanks to which it had grown and which it no longer required – i.e. the middle classes, whose resistance it now brutally suppressed. Secondly, it proceeded to destroy the parity of classes that had allowed fascism to be elevated to power, and which had been one of the main reasons for the republic’s defencelessness. The victim of this attack was the entire existing apparatus of parties and political institutions of parliamentary democracy – that is to say, fascism had not lost sight of its main objective, namely dictatorship. Bauer understood the transition to fascist dictatorship as a process in which state power became gradually autonomous of class relations under conditions of crisis and took on a life of its own. He was the first to establish the thesis, based on the model of Bonapartism and later repeated by Thalheimer, of the fascist state apparatus as a construct standing above all classes.

It is possible to query, as Bauer did, whether the transformation of the bourgeois democratic political order into the fascist order meant essential changes to the hitherto existing capitalist system. Without a doubt, this was the case, the most fundamental modification being the shift of class power. As long as the power of the capitalists is maintained, bourgeois democracy facilitates peaceful solutions to social conflicts. Its limitations result from the temporary nature of the class balance. It cannot be turned into the unlimited power of one particular class because the interests of voters, represented by political mass parties, have to be taken into account. Fascism’s liquidation of parliamentary democracy drained power from most of the bourgeoisie and remaining classes,

len, um der Größe seiner Erfolge willen, um der Kraft seines Widerstandes willen gewalt-

sam angegriffen, so ist er andererseits zu schwach, sich der Gewalt zu erwehren. Auf dem

Boden der bestehenden bürgerlichen Demokratie wirkend, an der Demokratie als seinen

Kampfboden und seiner Kraftquelle festhaltend, scheint er breiten, kleinbürgerlichen,
bäuerlichen, proletarischen Massen eine "Systempartei", ein Teilhaber und Nutznießer
jener bürgerlichen Demokratie, die sie vor der Verelendung durch die Wirtschaftskrise
nicht zu schützen vermag. Er vermag daher die durch die Krise revolutionierten Massen
nicht an sich zu ziehen. Sie strömen seinem Todfeind, dem Faschismus zu. Das Resultat
dieses Gleichgewichtes der Kräfte oder vielmehr der Schwäche beider Klassen ist der Sieg
des Faschismus, der die Arbeiterklasse im Dienste der Kapitalisten niederwirft, aber im
Solde der Kapitalisten diesen so über den Kopf wächst, dass sie ihn schließlich zum unbes-
chränkten Herren über das ganze Volk und damit auch über sich selbst machen müssen’ –
Bauer 1976p, pp. 148–9.

39 Not unlike Thalheimer and Trotsky, Bauer linked the shift in the balance of forces to the emergence of the NSDAP as a mass party.
instead granting unlimited power to big capital and big landowners. Hence, fascism transferred its social basis from the middle classes to monopoly capital. Bauer explained this state of affairs through the fascist dictatorship’s dependency on big capital, which continued to hold economic power in the fascist state and thus maintained its influence upon political decisions. In other words, the fascist state left property relations untouched – class power always remained in the hands of the capitalists, even if their personnel changed. Bauer concluded that fascism was a totalitarian dictatorship of the pro-war sections of the big bourgeoisie and big landowners. Its establishment completed the process of bourgeois counter-revolution, which had begun in 1920. The victory of fascism was evidence of the importance of the middle classes in the class struggle between big capital and the working class.

Another fundamental component of Bauer’s 1936 analysis of fascism deserves mention – namely its understanding of fascist rule as a division between the economic rule of big capital and the political rule of the fascist bureaucratic caste, which consisted of declassed elements of all classes. According to Bauer, this division had far-reaching consequences both for fascism itself and for the potential direction in which the history of Europe would evolve. Conflicts of interest between the ruling and the dominant class are inevitable in a fascist regime – the ‘command economy’ developed by fascism forces the fascist bureaucracy to make decisions that contradict the interests of the respective groups of capitalists. It thus becomes an opponent of these groups and reinforces state power over all social classes. On the other hand, pro-war fractions of big monopoly capital gain the upper hand under fascism and build the armaments industry at the expense of other branches of the economy. Militarism and expansionism, according to Bauer, inevitably culminate in war.

This analysis is neither entirely accurate nor convincing. Of course, one might agree with Botz that the analogy between fascism and Bonapartism is a stage in Bauer’s analyses of fascism – if only because Between Two World Wars, of which ‘Fascism’ was but a fragment, contained a series of statements on the imperialist roots of fascism. If one, however, treats ‘Fascism’ as an autonomous text, it becomes truly questionable. From a historical standpoint,

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40 The SPD leadership upheld the belief that fascism serves the interests of big capital from 1934 onward. Compare Zmierczak 1988, p. 88.
41 Botz argues that Bauer’s differentiation between the role of big capital and that of the petty bourgeoisie in the fascist movement served a political purpose, namely to extend the influence of Social Democracy to the middle classes. See Botz 1980, p. 171.
42 See also Tasca 2010; compare Bloch 1972, p. 189.
43 Compare Botz 1980, p. 174.
fascism was not a result of the balance of class forces in either Italy or Germany, as by 1920 the working class in both countries was already too weak to be able to resist a bourgeois counter-revolution. After 1920, the bourgeoisie had no reason to fear a revolution – even Bauer conceded this in 1936. Nor is it possible to explain the fascist offensive simply by citing the economic crisis, given that fascism in both countries only seized power when the effects of the crisis had waned. To this day, many different theories are offered as to why fascism managed to captivate millions of people and prevail. It is certainly not a terrible mistake to assume that fascism was the result of a cacophony of economic, political and social factors, of which economic crises, the crisis of bourgeois values and bourgeois culture, and the crisis of the parliamentary democratic system were decisive.

2.2 Austrofascism as a Special Sub-Variety of Fascism

In the early 1930s, Austria’s Marxist organisations did not initially pay any great attention to the fascisation of its own country. One can put this down to objective political and ideological conditions: for the broad masses, the polarisation between the two fascist currents was barely recognisable, and the interference of the Heimwehr in the state apparatus increased gradually. The lack of interest in fascism was an ideological weakness that undermined the programmatic positions of both Communists and Social Democrats. The Communists did not undertake any theoretical analysis of the fascist phenomenon. Instead, they confined themselves to the thesis of ‘social fascism’, according to which the opportunist politics of Social Democracy were partly to blame for the fascisation of Austria. Although there is no doubting the one-sided, narrow nature of their positions, the Communists’ evaluation of the Social Democrats’ strategies was nevertheless accurate. Bauer’s concept of the ‘defensive role of force’, which in 1926 became official party policy, permitted the use of revolutionary violence only when civil rights and political liberties were drastically infringed. Violence was reserved for the worst-case scenario – i.e. an ultimate attack on democracy in the course of which basic rights were abolished. How the working class and its party should approach a situation in which anti-democratic forces gradually conquered state power did not form part of Bauer’s reflections.

Bauer’s views on the fascisation of Austria from 1926–32 are characterised by his unswerving belief in the ability of democracy to defend itself and prevail through its intrinsic mechanisms. As mentioned earlier, his statement at the 1927 congress concerning the possibility of a fascist dictatorship in Austria and the ability of the working class to resist was optimistic. By no means do we wish to imply that Bauer failed to take notice of the growing influence of the Heimwehr in the state apparatus. On the contrary, in 1927, he spoke out against
wildcat strikes and workers’ demonstrations initiated without official endorsement from the party and trade unions in order to avoid confrontations with the Heimwehr. It did not escape the attention of Social Democracy’s opponents that this was motivated by Bauer’s characteristically fearful politics and aversion to radical phenomena. It is hardly surprising that they felt intensely relaxed about the SDAP’s election victory in 1930; after all, they were aware that the Social Democrats would not use the historical opportunity that they had, once again, been given. The election result only inspired Bauer to an even more confident assessment of the possibilities to preserve the democratic foundations of the state. In 1930, he presented conclusions on the unlikelihood of a fascist dictatorship in Austria on economic grounds. For example, he surmised that Austria’s dependency on foreign capital was a de facto guarantee against the fascists rising to power. Evidently, this was a wrong assumption – Bauer did not consider that German and Italian capital in fact bankrolled the Heimwehr and the National Socialists. Bauer’s other economic prognosis, based on Hilferding’s theory of organised capitalism, was just as inaccurate. According to this theory, finance capital would be transformed into state capital because of the crisis, i.e. it would assume the form of a centrally planned economy and pave the way for socialism.

It follows that Bauer still did not yet fear a fascist threat in early 1930s Austria. His statements at the LSI congress in 1931, where he cited the possibility of defeating fascism and saving democracy, are further evidence of this. So too are his remarks at the SDAP congress in 1932, where he proposed a struggle against anti-democratic tendencies waged by parliamentary means. Until 1932, Bauer was convinced that Austria did not contain a social basis for fascism, and that fascism overestimated its own abilities. He continued to underestimate fascism’s impact, even when it became startlingly apparent due to the progressive fascisisation of the Christian Social Party and ever-closer links between conservative forces and fascists of both varieties.

When Dollfuss dissolved parliament in March 1933, Bauer was forced to admit that he had introduced an authoritarian regime, even if he rightly did not refer to it as totalitarian. He also observed that the Heimwehr had consolidated its position in the bourgeois government and believed it possible that it would evolve towards fascism. He identified both the landed gentry, the Jewish bourgeoisie who sought protection from the anti-Semitism of the Nazis, and the urban and peasant middle classes under the influence of the Christian Social Party as the social vehicles of fascism. In 1933, Bauer was still wrong.

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44 See Bauer 1980t, p. 253.
in his appraisal of fascism and was weighed down by contradictions. His article, ‘Um die Demokratie’ (‘For Democracy’), was an example of this: on the one hand, he admitted that the crisis had pushed the weary working class onto the defensive and had incapacitated it from defending democracy.\textsuperscript{45} On the other, he expected the proletariat to win over the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry, who were divided between the democratic and conservative wings of the Christian Social Party, to the defence of the democratic state order.\textsuperscript{46} Moreover, the article testified to his erroneous diagnosis of the political situation, including his misjudgement of the two fascist movements.\textsuperscript{47} There is no other way to explain why he feared that the two currents might merge. Similarly, Bauer’s support for Dollfuss’s emergency regulations against the Nazis was not particularly well thought out. Given that the government’s plans in 1933 were not exactly a secret, it would have been easy to predict that the same laws would soon also be used against Marxists. We shall refrain from focusing on Bauer’s publications from 1933–4 in detail, as they are rather unfruitful for our purposes. To summarise, Bauer did not believe that Austrofascism could win, right up until the defeat of the February uprising.\textsuperscript{48} Without wishing to provide a justification for his neglect, it is certainly the case that the fascist phenomenon, which was not one of Bauer’s main areas of study at the time, caught him by surprise.

From 1934–8, after the demise of democracy, Bauer attempted an analysis of Austrofascism that contained theoretical elements. It is therefore justified to call it a theory of Austrofascism. Ahead of our appraisal, let us recall that Bauer consistently viewed fascism as a national phenomenon, and that there were two main reasons for his hostility towards Austrofascism: first, Dollfuss’s insistence on Austrian independence, which was irreconcilable with Bauer’s

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{45} See Bauer 1980u, p. 304.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Commenting on this proposal, Hanisch writes: ‘What he [Bauer] overlooked, however, is how deeply imbued the aversion against parties, parliament, and therefore against democracy had already become in the mentality and collective feelings of the population’ – Hanisch 2011, p. 293.
\item \textsuperscript{47} The Heimwehr aspired to gain a political position in the state. The main goal of the National Socialists, on the other hand, was the annexation of Austria to the German Reich. Kösten pointed out the naivety of Bauer’s approach at the time in Kösten 1984, p. 203.
\item \textsuperscript{48} He put his position very clearly: ‘In the long term, the situation of the Austrofascist dictatorship is therefore forlorn. It will either dismantle itself, seek to come to an understanding with the working class, capitulate before the working class, or the working class will overthrow it. The objective conditions of its overthrow will be created by the mechanism of its development’ (our translation) – Bauer 1980y, p. 418.
\end{itemize}
desire for union with Germany, and second, Bauer’s opposition to any political systems which infringed individual liberty and aimed to abolish its legal guarantees.

When approaching Austrofascism, Bauer aimed to reveal the economic, social and political basis of this phenomenon, especially the differences between Austrian, German and Italian fascism. The core of his conclusions was as follows: Austria is the first country in which clericalism with fascist tendencies conglomerated to form a dictatorship.

Bauer identified a number of causes for the victory of Austrofascism. The first was the fall of the Habsburg monarchy, which included the costs of the lost war and loss of foreign markets. The second was the economic situation of the First Republic – that is to say, dependency on foreign capital, the decline of exports, the banks’ loss of independence and subordination to state control, and the workers’ loss of purchasing power resulting from the crisis and unemployment. Bauer considered it less important to investigate the economic conditions that allowed fascism to grow than to study the mechanisms by which it seized power, its class content, and its nature and social base.

Indeed, it was not that easy to explain how fascism had come to power, especially since conditions in Austria were different from those in Germany or Italy. In Austria, fascism did not enjoy support from the masses and did not produce its own ideology or charismatic leaders. Nor is it possible to ignore the long-standing, relentless struggle between the two fascist trends. When analysing the mechanism due to which Austrian fascism had emerged, Bauer’s conclusions were similar to the works of contemporary historians:49 fascism rested on the illegitimate assumption of power by a coalition of governing forces, the representatives of the Christian Social Party and the Heimwehr, supported by the church. Bauer’s words succinctly reflected the situation in Austria:

So the clerical, Austrian-patriotic faction of the bourgeoisie hostile to union with Germany resolved to use the state power to establish a dictatorship which was intended to suppress by force German-nationalist Fascism and the working class at the same time. On the surface it imitated Fascist methods, adopted Fascist ideology, and linked it with Catholic clericalism. In reality, however, its ‘Fatherland Front’ did not arise from a popular mass movement, as did the Fascist party in Italy and the National

49 Compare the writings contained in Tálos, Emmerich and Wolfgang Neugebauer 1984. Matthes, who offers a somewhat divergent assessment that is no less historically accurate if one considers the long-term process of fascisisation, argues that Austrofascism seized power by gradually conquering the state apparatus. See Matthes 1979, p. 259.
Socialist Party in Germany, but was invented and established by the government, and was imposed on the mass of the people by the coercive power of the state. In this case Fascism is not the natural product of grass roots movements and class struggles, but an artefact which the constitutional state power has imposed upon the people.50

In light of the above, it was essential to define the social base and class content of the Austrofascist dictatorship. Bauer had to determine which social forces had elevated Dollfuss and the circle of politicians around him to the levels of power, and whose interests the new regime represented. Once again, Bauer returned to the theoretical framework of Bonapartism, which impeded him from identifying the actual agents of fascism in Austria, where democracy had been abolished not by forces outside of the bourgeois parties, but by a right-wing government. Once more, Bauer reiterated the thesis of a ‘third force’ standing above the bourgeoisie and proletariat. The two classes both appeared incapable of coordinating their political activities. The ‘third force’ supposedly comprised the aristocratic landowners and church hierarchy, who used the Heimwehr to seize power. Meanwhile, the declassed peasants, petty bourgeoisie and unemployed workers were not aware of the true aims of the political struggle and were therefore mere tools of the aristocracy. Bauer conceded that the aristocracy initially had to share power with representatives of the major industries, yet it emerged victorious from its struggle for leadership against big capital, which was inclined towards National Socialism.

As to the class content of the Austrian fascist state, Bauer’s view was not entirely thought-through. His point that the Austrofascist dictatorship represented the concerns of the capitalists against the defeated working class coexisted with permanent denials of bourgeois class rule under Austrofascism and an emphasis on the regime’s clerical-feudal character. Bauer referred to it as a ‘historical anomaly’ and thought of it as a feudal relic. For him, Austrofascism embodied the rule of classes whose historical time had passed – an anachronism in the capitalist epoch.

Let us examine the corporative state, the Ständestaat, to determine whether a fascist dictatorship was introduced in Austria. To stick with the terminology proposed by Bauer, we need to establish whether the dictatorship he described really did have a feudal character. The short answer is no – the ‘historical anomaly’ described by Bauer never existed. Not realising that the aristocracy and church had lost their pre-capitalist character in the era of monopoly capital-

50 Bauer 1978e, p. 184.
The spectre of fascism, he envisaged a distorted image of Dollfuss's political system. Likewise, his evaluation of the role of the church in Austrofascism was wide of the mark. Contrary to his claims, it did not aspire to introduce a Catholic fascist dictatorship. As Hanisch demonstrates, the Austrian church was the absolute guardian of the authoritarian state and, as such, an obstacle for the fully developed fascist orientation of the government. It is true, however, that Dollfuss granted the church cultural and social privileges, and that the church used its influence upon the middle classes to foster support for the Dollfuss government.

Bauer distinguished between three phases of the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg dictatorship. He referred to the first phase of the Austrofascist system from 1934–6 as a coalition between clerical fascism and Heimwehr fascism. The church, the bureaucratic layer of officials, and the bourgeois-peasant organisations on the one hand, and the aristocracy and imperial officers on the other, supported it. Bauer was convinced that this system would soon collapse as it had a narrow social base, no charismatic leader, and was economically unstable – i.e. dependent on Italian capital. In 1935, Bauer saw a new danger arising from these factors. It has to be said that it was illusory: he feared Austrofascism’s alleged ambitions to consolidate its power by restoring the Habsburg monarchy. This belief was rooted in the fact that some elements in the church and Christian Social Party held monarchist sympathies. Yet the notion that the church would want to restore the monarchy was not based on fact, considering the 1855 concordat had not even granted the church half as many privileges as Dollfuss’s government was prepared to. Bauer’s suspicion that France, Britain and Italy had an interest in restoring the monarchy was equally unfounded: after Hitler’s victory in Germany, the Dollfuss government’s resolve to preserve Austrian independence coincided with British and French political interests, while the type of government in Austria was of little relevance to these countries. If the facts spoke for themselves, Bauer was scarcely inclined to acknowledge them. Instead, he dreamt up the nonsensical vision of a victorious working-class revolution in alliance with pro-German elements against the res-

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51 See Bauer 1980x, p. 449.
52 See Hanisch 1974, p. 253.
53 See Bauer 1980cc, p. 227.
54 In 1935, Bauer wrote: ‘Habsburg stands at the gates. The Austrofascist dictatorship is paving the way for the Habsburgians ... Not the Nazis, but the Habsburgians are the immediate, most pressing danger at the moment’. Original: ‘Habsburg steht vor den Toren. Die austrofaschistische Diktatur bahnt den Habsburgern den Weg … nicht die Nazis, sondern die Habsburger sind im Augenblick die nächste dringendste Gefahr’ – Bauer 1980aa, p. 505.
toration of the monarchy. In 1935, he was prepared to enter an agreement with the National Socialists to avert a restoration of the Habsburg monarchy and *de facto* jointly combat the Dollfuss government, even though he was fully aware that the potential German partner represented a deadly threat to the party and the working class.\(^{55}\) Botz sardonically notes in his comment on Bauer’s proposal that it was a rather surprising turn, given that from late 1933 to early 1934 he had still lent support to the establishment of the corporative state.\(^{56}\) To sum up Bauer’s secondary theory of Austrofascism, it is worth noting that he feared the restoration of the monarchy primarily because it might squander his hopes for Austria’s union with Germany.

It is critical that Bauer did not dedicate a great deal of attention to the second and third phases of Austrofascism that he had outlined. In his view, the second period from 1935-8 was characterised by the exclusion of the Heimwehr by clerical fascism, the effective autonomy of the state power, and its evolution in an autocratic-bureaucratic direction.

Bauer referred to the third period from February 1938 onward as a coalition between clerical fascism and National Socialism, backed by big industry, the petty bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia, and the state bureaucracy. In 1938, he was convinced that the National Socialists would establish their own dictatorship in Austria.\(^{57}\)

As Hanisch notes, Bauer was ultimately not sure about his views on Austrofascism.\(^{58}\) This is confirmed in the way he fluctuated between defining it as a fascist dictatorship and an autocratic regime. Although he repeatedly employed the term ‘fascist dictatorship’, Bauer still acknowledged that Austrian fascism was weaker than its German and Italian counterparts – it lacked popular support, its ideology was less ‘refined’ compared to Nazism, and its leaders were undecided as to its political direction. This dictatorship was not as comprehensive or brutal as others. In the last months of his life, Bauer revised his position and referred to the three phases of the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg dictatorship as ‘semi-fascism’, also using the term ‘small state fascism’.\(^{59}\)

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\(^{55}\) Compare Hanisch 1974, p. 257.

\(^{56}\) See Botz 1985, p. 176.

\(^{57}\) According to Kösten, Bauer identified ‘fascising’ factors in various forces, such as monarchists (1923), the Heimwehr (1930), the National Socialists (1932), and in the Dollfuss government (1933). See Kösten 1984, p. 270. Note that Bauer courted all manner of forces, hoping to come to some understanding, according to his subjective view of the political situation in Austria rather than a realistic assessment.

\(^{58}\) See Hanisch 1974, p. 256.

\(^{59}\) See Bauer 1980ff, p. 889.
Let us conclude by citing Botz, who pointed out that Bauer’s definition of ‘Austrofascism’ had little to do with the definition the author proposed for fascism in a broader sense. Botz assumes that Bauer coined the term for the purpose of political struggle rather than political analysis. It is more likely that the opposite was the case. Bauer aimed to establish a scientific distinction between Austrian fascism and other varieties. However, his lack of distance from the political events of the day, and the fact that he only knew the corporative state from an emigrant’s perspective, made it impossible for him to formulate an appropriate theoretical diagnosis of the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg system.

2.3  The Theory of Fascism as Imperialism

Shortly before his death, Bauer prepared the last, unfinished chapter of The Illegal Party for publication as a separate book. It contained his third theory of fascism, which linked the phenomenon with the economic development of capitalism and the changing role of the capitalist state in a more pronounced manner. It was similar to Hilferding’s premise of ‘organised capitalism’, which also attributed to the state a growing role in the economy and highlighted planning as a characteristic element of the capitalist economy. The theory was certainly not new. Although Bauer foregrounded the economic foundations of fascism, he denied this time around that the balance of class forces and class apparatus were a precondition for the fascist movement to seize power. At the same time, echoes of his first fascism theory still lingered: Bauer argued that under fascist rule, the executive power of the state became gradually autonomous. Furthermore, he emphasised the inner contradictions of the fascist system, which are expressed in the conflict of interests between the state apparatus and the respective social classes and groups.

The basic premise of Bauer’s third theory was his insistence that fascism was a form of aggressive, bellicose, imperialist capitalism. On this, he concurred with GDH Cole. One of the typical characteristics of aggressive capitalism, according to Bauer, was its tendency to increase the exploitation and oppression of the working class domestically while at the same time waging a struggle for markets abroad. It follows that Bauer considered capitalism’s development towards imperialism to be a general and fundamental condition for the rise of fascism. However, he realised that this general account was insufficient as an
chapter 8

explanation in understanding the reasons as to why fascism had prevailed in Germany and Italy, while fascist movements in other countries did not threaten the bourgeois democratic state order at all or merely resulted in the advent of semi-dictatorships or autocratic governments. To explain this phenomenon, he pointed to additional historical and social conditions that had paved the way for bellicose imperialism, including different democratic traditions and the effects of World War I. He cited as one of the effects of war the weakening of young democracies, which had occurred in the course of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary processes after the war and the inauguration of the parliamentary era in the victorious countries. In these countries, the bourgeoisie was bolstered by its success and maintained its position. Another consequence of the war, decisive for the political development in Europe, was the new division of the world, which had borne two kinds of imperialism: on the one hand, the conservative and peaceful imperialism of France and Britain, which continued to live off their colonies as well as at the expense of defeated Germany and Italy. On the other, an aggressive, pugnacious imperialism reigned supreme in Germany and Italy, which were particularly affected by the economic crisis and had ambitions to overrule it through territorial expansion. Fascism was – so went Bauer’s conclusion – a weapon in the struggle to revise the division of the world.

When fascism succeeded, it envisaged a new economic and political order which reflected the changes to which the structure of monopoly capitalism had been subjected. The most fundamental of these changes was a tendency to intensify the statist organisation of the economy while keeping property relations intact. This tendency became stronger in the wake of World War I and the 1929 economic crisis. According to Bauer, it found its fullest expression in the command economy of the fascist state, which he regarded as its essence and its totalitarian character: the state regulated all areas of life and had full power over the economy. Bauer referred to the state control over the economy as ‘fascist etatism’ (or, alternatively, ‘war economy’ or ‘dirigist economy’) and regarded it as a new development phase of capitalism, a qualitatively new form of imperial-

63 Compare Botz 1985, p. 180.
64 Bauer wrote: ‘Since then, British and French imperialism have been defending the dominant position they won in the world war. Britain’s and France’s imperialism is the imperialism of the satisfied, a full stomach imperialism. It is therefore conservative and peaceful’ (our translation) – Bauer 1980ff, p. 874. Note that unlike in his earlier writings, Bauer refrained from criticising the expansionist and militarist aims of French and British colonialism in this text. He probably did so in order to highlight Germany and Italy’s aggressive war drive, and to stress the more threatening character of their imperialism.
ism. At the same time, he was inclined to acknowledge positive effects achieved by the war economy and its imposed control over the labour and wage market and planned economy, including a lowering of the unemployment rate, an increase in work productivity, the development of new economic branches due to armament policies, and technological progress. Naturally, this does not mean that Bauer overlooked the unfavourable sides of imperialism’s evolution. On the contrary, he stressed that labour legislation disadvantageous to the working class had preceded the statist economy. Indeed, fascist labour legislation ushered in many negative changes for workers: the trade unions were dissolved, strikes prohibited, wage agreements annulled, forced labour introduced, and wages determined by the state. Nevertheless, reflecting on his conclusions in *Rationalisierung*, Bauer recognised the superiority of fascist statism over free market capitalism, even though he was fully aware of the restrictions imposed by ‘war economy’. Granted, he did not consider statism to be a cure for all of capitalism’s ills. For instance, he did not think that it could overcome crises – he merely believed they would be different under fascism. According to Bauer, crises caused by an undersupply of goods for peaceful purposes were inevitable.

Bauer drew attention to the fact that the war economy served the state military rather than the immediate interests of social classes. The war imperialism of the fascist states forced other countries to raise their armaments expenses. The contradictions between the capitalist countries led to economic fluctuation as the fear of war restricts the flow of capital towards peacetime production. Bauer’s conclusion was correct: the fascist command economy would meet its limits and precede war. For Bauer, there was an integral link between the imminence of war and the development of imperialism. This was not a completely novel insight, but rather reiterated the theses contained in Bauer’s articles on imperialism and his first theory of fascism. According to Botz and Butterwegge, Bauer’s prognosis that the synthesis of fascism and imperialism would inevitably lead to conflict was not too distant from Communist assessments of fascism from the 1920s and 30s.\(^6\) Note, however, that Bauer’s analysis was far more profound than the Communists’ rhetoric, which ignored the historical, political, and economic factors that allowed fascism to grow – e.g. the weakness of parliamentary democracy, the consequences of World War I, the command of politics over the economy, and the effects of economic crisis.

In 1938, Bauer made two prognoses with respect to the fate of fascism – one was of a purely political nature, the other was sociological-political. According

\(^6\) See Botz 1985, p. 189; compare Butterwegge 1990, p. 556.
to his political prognosis, the fascist dictatorships in Italy, Poland, Estland, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were weakened; yet on the other hand, he predicted that Hitler would attack Eastern Europe. The sociological-political prognosis was far more complex. It was based on the incoherence of class rule and political power under fascism. Let us note that the manner in which this fascism theory illustrated the relationship between the two powers was nebulous. Aside from claiming that the fascist dictatorship reinforced the economic power of the bourgeoisie, Bauer asserted that the fascist government is thrown into conflict with the big bourgeoisie in particular. The governing fascist caste turns on various fractions of the capitalist ruling class, uniting with them in common struggle only to keep the working class at bay. Bauer’s emphasis on the tensions and instability of the fascist system served one particular purpose: to reinforce the vision of an anti-fascist revolution. Pointing out the conflict of interests between the political and economic powers served to buttress the notion that this would lead to a radical transformation of the social conditions, and thus to a loss of fascism’s social base. At the end of the manuscript, Bauer cited three enemies of fascism: the working class, the disappointed petty bourgeoisie, and the bourgeoisie at odds with fascism for economic reasons. These classes would wage a common struggle to abolish the totalitarian regime. The notion of cross-class struggle directly referred to Bauer’s concept of the anti-fascist united front, according to which the proletariat would lead the middle classes and parts of the capitalist class into struggle. In 1938, Bauer was convinced of the following:

If the working class gets moving, if big mass strikes shake the fascist system of rule and the statist command economy to its foundations, then broad masses of petty bourgeois, peasants, and intellectuals will coalesce around the working class to bring down the hated fascist bureaucracy, its totalitarian rule, and its dictatorship over economic life.66

our translation

It was, of course, another misguided prognosis. The conclusions Bauer drew from the concept of a ‘dirigist economy’, however, were not as idealistic as his previous verdicts in his theory of ‘organised capitalism’ – i.e. he did not think of it as a phase that heralded the socialist economy. This does not mean that he relinquished his fatalist perspective. Rather, he now supported his notion of the inevitability of socialism by citing the dialectical unity of the objective and

66 Bauer 1980ff, p. 895.
subjective development tendencies of fascist imperialism, i.e. the centralised economy and the anti-fascist, socialist revolution.

3 The Anti-Fascist Uprising of Austrian Workers

The primary objectives of fascism of the Austrian variety were to eliminate political parties, including the Social-Democratic party, from the political stage, abolish the republic, and establish the corporative state. On its way to achieving these goals, Austrofascism encountered an unexpected obstacle: a spontaneous and dramatic workers’ uprising in defence of the beleaguered and suppressed democracy lasting from 12–18 February 1934.

The outbreak of the February uprising poses a number of questions. We have already addressed in points 1 and 2 as to whether fascism in Austria lived up to its own ambitions in the same way as German fascism did. Further questions still need to be addressed: Were fratricidal struggles inevitable in the democratic republic that Austria had become after the fall of the monarchy? Why could a political compromise agreed in parliament not resolve the escalating conflict? Finally, why was the Social-Democratic leadership unable to stop the course of events and live up to the challenges posed by both Austrofascism and the working class?

All Austrian political forces, including the Social Democrats, were clear that the warning accommodated in the programme of Linz, according to which force would be used if fascism seized power, was not a credible threat. When parliament was dissolved, the Social-Democratic party was deprived of the democratic conditions for struggle that had been its strategic premise – it was synonymous with the party’s exclusion from the political arena. The only trajectory still possible for the party was that of active resistance. Alas, Bauer lacked the self-assertion and decisiveness that so distinguished Dollfuss. In light of the constitutional crisis, the SDAP leadership failed to call for the strike that the working masses were expecting for fear of civil war. Instead, it announced that it was prepared to co-operate with the government on the imminent constitutional reform that aimed to strengthen the executive power. What is more, the SDAP offered the Dollfuss government the support of the Schutzbund and agreed with the decision to grant the government extraordinary powers – this, it hoped, would be the harbinger for co-operation in the struggle against Nazism. The tactical misjudgements committed by the party leadership resulted not only from its erratic assessment of the political situation; they were also the product of Social Democracy’s ideological and programmatic assumptions, i.e. its belief in the inevitability of historical progress.
It was precisely this belief that additionally reinforced the party’s unrealistic evaluation of its own strength and of the situation.\(^{67}\) Other political factors also played a significant part in its choice of tactics – that is, the party’s long-standing and loyal adherence to democratic methods, its lack of faith in the workers’ fighting spirit, and the notion that the country was isolated and under threat from the fascist powers that had grown abroad. These were accompanied by moral considerations, such as the aversion to fratricidal struggle, and individual temperaments, such as the fear of taking responsibility for radical political decisions and unwillingness to act consequently displayed by Social-Democratic politicians. These various factors led to the SDAP leadership’s passivity, which undermined the workers’ militancy, which had still been alive and full of promise in 1933. Consequently, the winner in the struggle against fascism was predetermined, as it were, and the demise of democracy in Austria accelerated.\(^{68}\)

The fascist dictatorships of Italy and Germany were no less interested in the destruction of Austrian democracy than Dollfuss was. They differed only in their ultimate objectives: Dollfuss aspired, in the name of banishing the ‘red peril’, to abolish the democratic and social successes of the working masses, dissolve the Marxist parties and trade unions, and strengthen the position of the church by exterminating the influence of anti-clerical Social Democracy. For Italy and Germany, in contrast, expansionist aims were paramount.\(^{69}\) When Dollfuss’s attempts to come to an understanding with Hitler failed,\(^{70}\) Italy offered to help him to introduce dictatorial powers in Austria, but made the offer dependent on Dollfuss’s hastening of the process of combating Social Democracy. The Heimwehr, having won such a strong ally, decided to proceed in radical fashion.\(^{71}\) These were truly decisive moments for the republic, yet the SDAP leadership failed. It lacked gumption, and the fear of civil war and its

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67 Over years, the party leadership's waiting for a favourable historical moment instead of going on the offensive inevitably led to an eternal ‘wait and see’ politics in practice, as Leser writes. Consequently, the party was not taken seriously as a political partner. Compare Leser 1986, pp. 296–7.

68 In 1933, Dollfuss still had to consider democratic forces in the Christian Social Party and state apparatus.

69 Germany wanted to annex Austria to make its invasion of Czechoslovakia easier. Italy aimed at establishing a union of fascist states (Italy, Hungary, Austria) to counterbalance Nazi Germany.

70 The failed negotiations between Dollfuss and Hitler were decisive in Dollfuss’s resolve to preserve Austrian independence and his hostility towards Nazism.

71 The leader of the Heimwehr and minister of domestic security, Emil Fey, ordered to search party buildings for arms, destroy Social-Democratic printing presses, and arrest mem-
aftermath left it paralysed. Aware of the anti-fascist sentiments of the workers, it decided on 8 February to postpone the outbreak of civil war and on 12 February 1934 it restricted the role of the Schutzbund to purely defensive measures. Yet the party’s apparent willingness to fight turned out to be false – the contrast between words and deeds not only threatened to fatally undermine the leadership’s credibility in the party ranks, but also cost several hundred human lives. This was the price paid for years of bandying revolutionary phraseology – alas, Bauer and his close circle of comrades realised this too late.

On 12 February 1934, the Schutzbund troops of Linz initiated, against the decision of the party leadership, a skirmish against the Heimwehr and armed police, thus firing the starting shot for the outbreak of the workers’ uprising. The ensuing street battles ravaged Upper Austria, Styria, and Vienna in particular. The desperate Schutzbund troops recognised the hopelessness of their situation from the start. Their leaders, Ernst Fischer and Ernst Draskowitsch, noted as early as 12 February: ‘This struggle is lost from the outset. One cannot capitulate for a whole year and then win.’ Neither did the chair of the Schutzbund, General Theodor Körner, see any chances of success – and both the right wing (Kautsky) and left wing (Béla Kun) of the international workers’

72 According to Konrad, ‘by 19 February, all regional and local leaders of the Schutzbund, numbering almost 200, had been arrested’ – Konrad 2004. In the night from 11–12 February, the Heimwehr unit commander of Linz, Richard Bernaschek, informed Bauer in a letter about the decision to resist a planned raid of the local party building with firearms. In his reply, Bauer did not approve of the decision. See Rabinach 1989, p. 173; compare Braunthal 1961, p. 35.

73 About 20,000 Schutzbund members, joined by some Communists, fought against better armed and better organised units: the 4,200-strong army, the 7,500-strong police, and 9,600-strong bourgeois paramilitaries. There is no agreement among Austrian historians as to how many combatants were wounded and killed. According to Gulick, there were 118 dead and 486 injured on the pro-government side, and 196 dead and 319 wounded on the rebel side. See Gulick 1948; Peball 1974, p. 38.

74 See also Kulemann 1979, p. 400.

75 Ibid.
movement agreed that the uprising was a belated affair. Aside from the political determinant, the psychological aspect was no less decisive in the heroic struggle of the Schutzbund troops. Not only did they defend democracy, they also defended the reputation of a party many identified with, and whose willingness to fight they trusted.

Reacting to the unwelcome uprising, the SDAP leadership restricted itself to proclaiming a general strike. For a number of reasons, this strike turned out to be a fiasco lacking mass support. Economic limitations, such as the fear of losing one’s job in a time of economic crisis, played a role. So too did sociological and political aspects: the masses did not believe they could win, and the party had imbued them with the superiority of legal struggle for many years. What is more, there were organisational issues: there was no real defence plan and scarce information with respect to arms and coordination of actions. Contradictory decisions and irresponsible conduct on the part of the SDAP leaders further contributed to the debacle. The lone Schutzbund fighters, abandoned in struggle by the party leadership, laid down arms on 18 February 1934. As the conflict was still ongoing, the government dissolved the Social-Democratic party, arrested its leaders, and sent 10,000 people to concentration camps.

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76 See Kautsky 1934, p. 18; compare Kun 1934.
77 Some telling facts testify to the poor organisation of the uprising: turning off the electricity – a pre-arranged sign to commence the strike – made it impossible for Bruno Kreisky to print Bauer’s fighting appeal. When the strike was called, Danneberg and Renner went to join a meeting with Christian-Social politicians, thus exposing themselves to immediate arrest. Due to bad organisation, Bauer and Deutsch faced an army cordon in front of them instead of joining the fighting members of the Schutzbund as intended. As Hanisch writes, Bauer and Deutsch were transferred to Czechoslovakia on the second day of the uprising. The combatants were outraged at the flight of their leaders. See Hanisch 2011, p. 305.
78 After 1934, numerous Schutzbund members joined the Communist Party of Austria and newly formed socialist groups. Some of them established an illegal faction named ‘Autonomous Schutzbund’ that was disconnected from the party in the same year. A significant percentage of them emigrated to Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, and then to Spain in 1936. See West 1978, p. 44. Konrad confirms this depiction of events, adding that in 1934 many Social Democrats joined the Nazis, who were regarded as the main opponents of the corporative state. See Konrad 2004, p. 96. Hanisch states more precisely that some fighters (mostly from the big cities and industrial areas) joined the Communists and others joined the Nazis (mostly from the provinces), while most simply went into ‘inner exile’. See Hanisch 2011, p. 306.
79 Seitz and Hugo Breitner were arrested, and some leaders were executed. The uprising
At that point, the party numbered more than 700,000 members, enjoyed the support of 1.5 million voters, had an 80,000-strong paramilitary organisation at its disposal, occupied 71 of 165 parliamentary seats, and had 25 delegates in regional governments and 387 town mayors. The defeat of the uprising and the party became the subject of numerous assessments, analyses, and controversies, especially in the Social-Democratic movement. After all, its leaders had an interest in denying any responsibility for the defeat. Even observers not directly involved in Austrian political life agreed that the February uprising amounted to a conscious act by a section of the working class not only against the government's actions, but also against the reformist line of the SDAP leadership. At the same time, it was synonymous with the defeat of Bauer's political line. It was Bauer who was chiefly responsible for reinforcing the masses' illusions in the party's willingness to fight.80

Numerous 1934 articles and his pamphlet Der Aufstand der österreichischen Arbeiter (The Austrian Workers' Uprising) testify to the fact that Bauer felt more responsible for the course of events than any of the other SDAP leaders. They also prove that he was unable to understand the essential elements which led to the party's downfall – that is, the contradiction between its revolutionary rhetoric and passive political practice (its opponents recognised this contradiction and knew how to take advantage of it). Furthermore, Bauer's writings prove that his basic theoretical premises had been wrong, leading to erratic judgement and inaccurate decisions in response to given socio-political conditions. In The Austrian Workers' Uprising, Bauer did admit to tactical errors, yet he did not subject the actual political line of the party to any criticism. In his view, a range of factors that could be blamed on the SDAP leadership had a huge impact abroad. By 12 February, the first demonstrations in solidarity with the Austrian workers took place in Czechoslovakia. The British Labour Party set up a fund to support the families of workers killed in the uprising. Anti-fascist activities in France, Italy and Spain followed in the wake of the Austrian uprising. About 2,000 of the combatants later joined the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War. They also formed a battalion named '12 February', which in 1938 became the first Austrian military formation fighting for Austria's independence. The workers' uprising had awakened Austrian national consciousness.

On this question, I concur with Leser, who states: 'The 12 February uprising was not only a heroic sacrifice on behalf of the working class of Vienna that had remained loyal. It was also the day when an unconstitutional regime employed force against the defenders of democracy. It was the collapse of a politics on which Bauer had already stated the following in 1911, unaware that he would thus describe his own politics: “The worst politics is a politics of illusions. In the end, it can only ever lead to mass disappointment, discouragement, and ineffective outbreaks of desperation”' – Leser 1968, p. 483.
contributed to the defeat of the party: for instance, the inefficient organisation of the struggle, the failed general strike, the Schutzbund troops being abandoned, and allowing the government to spread propaganda according to which the party leadership had fled – the latter, it must be added, was undeniable with respect to Bauer and Deutsch. On the other hand, also conducive to the SDAP’s defeat was the general economic and political situation that the party was in no position to influence, i.e. economic crises that subjected the petty-bourgeois and peasant masses to poverty, the defeat of the German working class in the struggle against Nazism, and the fading out of the revolutionary wave in Europe.81 Bauer cited the following as mistakes, if only tactical mistakes: the SDAP’s refusal to co-operate with Karl Buresch’s government after the 1932 elections, which strengthened the advance of both the Heimwehr and NSDAP; and the failure to proclaim a general strike in response to Dollfuss’s dissolving parliament and introducing emergency measures. Bauer openly discussed whether the Dollfuss dictatorship could have been prevented and denied that this could have been achieved. Objectively, he argued, the economic crisis drove the masses into the arms of the fascists. Undoubtedly, one cannot blame Bauer and the party leadership for the conscious destruction of Austrian democracy, for which the two fascist groups and the conservative right wing of the Christian Social Party bear responsibility. I concur with Pelinka on this point: ‘February 1934 was neither a tragedy that came over Austria solely through “objective circumstances”, nor the result of “shared responsibility” or a “renunciation of democracy” for which all parties were equally responsible. February 1934 saw the dramatic conclusion of a development consciously pushed forward, for which Dollfuss, Starhemberg, and Fey were openly prepared to take responsibility’ (our translation).82 However, one should add that Bauer’s misguided policies, based on the Austromarxist doctrine, were a factor that fostered and accelerated this development. If one draws strategic and tactical premises for the working-class struggle from a theory that had long been detached from reality, the inadequacy of these premises is transparent from the outset.

81 See Bauer 1934, p. 24.
82 Pelinka 1984, p. 12.
Austrian Social Democracy and the Triumph of Fascism

Austrian Social Democracy’s Relationship to Strategic and Tactical Concepts of the Workers’ Movement During the Period of Fascist Reaction

We shall now assess the statement, at the end of our previous section, according to which a theory out of touch with reality led to inadequate strategic premises. It implies that the means and methods Bauer proposed for the anti-fascist struggles were unfit for purpose, even with respect to his own evaluation of fascism. It does not, however, fully explain the motives that determined Bauer and his party comrades’ decisions during the February uprising. In truth, the strategy and tactics that the party had adopted for the working-class struggle against fascism drove their decisions. These, in turn, were based not on a realistic assessment of the social and political situation, but rather on the values that the Social Democrats were willing to defend.

Let us take a closer look at Bauer and the SDAP leadership's anti-fascist strategy and the goals to which it was subordinated. Between the Hamburg congress of the LSI in 1923 and the last SDAP party congress in 1933, Bauer's accounts on the general strategic premises of the anti-fascist struggle of the proletariat were characterised primarily by their purely declarative revolutionary nature and his aversion to co-operating with the Communists. These sentiments were typical for the parties that belonged to the LSI. Another prominent aspect was the fact that the individual parties championed their respective national interests over the interests of the international workers' movement as a whole. This made it impossible to arrive at a shared line of action against fascism and weakened the practical meaning of resolutions adopted at the LSI congresses. Since the beginning of the organisation's existence, Bauer set the tone of official LSI documents, and it was largely his views that determined their form. At the founding congress of the LSI, he warned of the international dimension of the fascist phenomenon. In a rather one-sided fashion, he blamed the Bolsheviks for its emergence. In his opinion, they had contributed to its rise by splitting the international workers' movement and trade unions, as well as introducing terror. For fear that red terror might spread, he argued, the bourgeoisie called the fascists to its aid. Bauer rightly criticised the Communists' dogmatic thinking – for them, the working-class struggle against fascism could be used to rapidly herald the world revolution. He conceded with the Communists, however, that the available democratic institutions were not enough.
to stop the fascisisation of the country. He pleaded for coupling parliamentary action with street demonstrations. He issued the following tasks to the Social-Democratic movement: maintaining the proletariat’s readiness to fight, providing military training for the youth, and reinforcing democratic values in society, particularly in areas subordinated to the state apparatus.

The resolution Bauer authored and put to the fifth LSI congress in Paris in 1933 reflected the enormous importance he attributed to preserving democracy (this document was previously discussed in Chapter 7, which pointed out the two different strains of working-class anti-fascist struggle it advocated, which depended on the degree to which democracy was threatened). Bauer acknowledged the theory of ‘organised capitalism’ in defence of democracy, demonstrating that due to the arms economy, monopoly capitalism had achieved a level of organisation it had predicted. According to Bauer, this would lead to a transformation of the system into a socialist state in the near future, i.e. the fall of the fascist dictatorships. Bauer’s resolution bore the demand for preserving the neutrality of the LSI if any constituent parties took up negotiations with the Comintern concerning the creation of a united front of the working class against fascism. However, the Paris congress did not adopt this postulate.

Not for nothing did Bauer insist, in both congress speeches, that the main goal of the working-class struggle against fascism was not a socialist revolution, but rather the defence of bourgeois democracy and its political and social gains. This hierarchy of priorities was also consistent with the speeches of other LSI party leaders. It found a passionate advocate in the secretary of the LSI, Friedrich Adler, who argued that surrendering the struggle for democracy would be tantamount to admitting that Social Democracy had chosen the wrong path. The Social Democrats defended bourgeois democracy on two bases: as a value in itself, and as a necessary premise for the struggle for social change. One is inclined to agree with Zmierczak’s argument that the Social Democrats were so preoccupied with the necessity of defending democracy that they rarely ever contemplated a course of action for the case that the democratic system was under threat. When fascism seized power in Germany and Italy, the lack of a clear programme paralysed the Social Democrats. Distinct examples for this were the passive attitude of the SPD in light of the

84 See Protocol of the International Socialist Workers’ Congress in Hamburg, 21–25 May 1923, in Documents, Programmes, Protocols, p. 26.
85 Replying to the Austrian left socialists’ demand to adopt the slogan of a ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’, Friedrich Adler stressed in his letter that the fundamental interest of the working class was to defend democracy. See Zmierczak 1988, p. 89.
86 See Zmierczak 1988, p. 93.
dissolution of Prussian parliament (1932) and the appointment of Hitler’s government in 1933, as well as the disengaged stance of the SDAP during the events of February 1934.

The defeat of the Austrian workers’ uprising led Bauer to reconsider his position on bourgeois democracy, even if he effectively only modified his earlier standpoint to the slightest degree. Fatalist optimism still prevailed. For Bauer, the February defeat was but a step towards the final victory of the proletariat. Indeed, Bauer continued to advocate bourgeois democracy and resisted all criticism from within the socialist camp, which blamed parliamentary democracy for the defeat of the workers’ movement. The true cause of defeat, according to Bauer, had been the susceptibility of the petty bourgeoisie, peasantry, and part of the working class to Dollfuss’s fascist ideas. Like many other socialists of his time, Bauer failed to realise that fascism had exploited the disappointment of these layers, who had been let down by the Social-Democratic party’s failure to put its proclaimed programme of social transformation into practice. What is more, Bauer was deeply convinced that the working class had to defend bourgeois democracy even if this implied that the working class would be perceived as a conservative force. The first reason was that bourgeois democracy was the result of working-class struggle, and its contemporary form was decisively shaped by the proletariat. Secondly, the bourgeois-democratic state form guaranteed, unlike fascist dictatorship, legally enshrined liberty. Only towards the end of his life did Bauer admit that this legal freedom was a source of passive reformism.

The victory of fascism was synonymous with the end of the legal Social-Democratic movement. In light of the consolidation of the fascist regime, Bauer suggested during the second half of 1934 the abandonment of the reformist tactic, having concluded that the fascist dictatorship could only be abolished by revolutionary means. Bauer spoke from the perspective of a revolutionary fanatic rather than a politician soberly evaluating available options for the workers’ movement. Proof of this can be found in his denial that it would be possible to return to bourgeois democracy once fascism was defeated. The new programme combined the struggle against fascism with the struggle for socialism. On this, Bauer was clear:

There is now only one task left: the overthrow of the fascist dictatorship. There is no other means to overthrow it than revolutionary force. However, the revolution against fascism cannot be a bourgeois revolu-

87 See Bauer 1934b, p. 8.
tion that the working class might attempt to drive forward and transform into a proletarian revolution at a later point. It can only be a proletarian revolution from the outset, for there are no more bourgeois revolutions in Europe. The task of overthrowing fascism thus coincides with the task of the working class to conquer state power. The struggle against fascism therefore becomes synonymous with the struggle for socialism. 

In 1934, Bauer did not shy away from using the term ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ when defining the type of state and methods for the proletariat to seize power, even if he was motivated by tactical considerations rather than his true beliefs. Nonetheless, he acknowledged the need for the working class to garner allies in the struggle against fascism, namely the petty bourgeoisie, peasantry, and intelligentsia. Hence, he insisted that the proletarian dictatorship was merely a brief transitional stage during which society would evolve towards classlessness. Bauer was convinced that a section of the middle classes would turn away from fascism and be so discouraged by its restriction of civil liberties and evident failure to realise its economic programme that it would instead give the workers’ movement its support. He ignored one important aspect: the middle classes sought protection under the wings of fascism because they feared being declassed. The notion of a classless society filled them with more anxiety than the totalitarian goals of fascism.

Bauer revised his aforementioned views on the correct anti-fascist strategy for the working-class movement after the February events. Did he, however, also change his attitudes towards collaboration with the Communists in this struggle? In the mid-1930s, his relationship to the Communist Party of Austria was no less ambivalent than his perspective on the Soviet Union. While he did stress the difference between fascist and Bolshevik dictatorships, he remained sceptical towards the Communists. His incredulity was due to divergent views on the forms of power struggle, the character and shape of proletarian force, democracy and dictatorship. Furthermore, his failure to comprehend the position of the KPÖ, which had gained in power after the defeat of Social Democracy, as well as its justified critique of the SDAP leadership, reinforced his aversion to the Communists. When fending off their objections, Bauer accused the Communists of having made it easier for the fascists to seize dominance. He persevered in his opposition to the united front of the working class created by both wings of the labour movement. Bauer justified his reluctance by point-

88 Bauer 1934b, p. 9.
89 More details in Hanisch 1974, p. 259.
ing to the legacy of the Russian Revolution, the weak position of Communist parties in Western countries, and, ultimately, his fear that Social Democracy might lose its middle-class support. Towards the end of his life, Bauer drew closer to the Communists on many issues. Some Communists believed that the evolution of his views amounted to Bauer’s recognition of the united front, yet this was an oversight. It is certainly the case that, in 1937, Bauer called on the working class of the West to support the Soviet Union in the struggle against fascism, and was buoyant towards the united front established in 1936. Yet he did not go so far as to consider it a true force in the struggle against fascism. It is also necessary to state that Bauer did not employ the term ‘popular front’ in the hope for an alliance between Communists and Social Democrats, but the united movement of the proletariat and middle classes against the common enemy. Bauer was aware that the conditions for such a movement did not exist in Western Europe at the time. Hence, he confined his advocacy of the Communist appeal for a bilateral struggle against fascism to the theory of ‘integral socialism’, which did not exceed the expectations of either side.

To reiterate, Austrian Social Democracy based its strategic premises for a working-class-led anti-fascist struggle on an inaccurate assessment of the socio-political situation in the country. From the observations outlined above, it follows that this resulted in the resolution to defend democracy, and later, in the period after the defeat of the Social-Democratic movement, the suggestion to start a revolution in isolation from the Communists. In Social-Democratic hands, this manoeuvre could not provide an effective means to combat fascism. From 1926 onward, the party leadership did not engage in any radical activities to protect democracy. On the contrary, it often behaved in a way that was counterproductive to these ends. Bauer’s attempts to broach an understanding with bourgeois parties in 1932 came too late – pro-fascist tendencies had already aligned themselves with the bourgeois bloc. After the defeat of the February uprising, the rallying cries for revolution lacked any basis in actuality, as scarcely any forces on which one might base such an endeavour remained. No working-class strategy against fascism had any chance of success in the Austria of the late 1920s and early 1930s. After all, the working class under the leadership of the SDAP had been in retreat since 1927. Meanwhile, the sections of the working and middle classes that had found protection in the ranks of the Christian Social Party supported the Heimwehr, and declassed members of all classes strengthened the ranks of the NSDAP.
4.2 Oppositional Activity of the Social-Democratic Movement at Home and in Exile after the SDAP Ban

The establishment of the corporative state on 1 May 1934 after Dollfuss had secured control of the government amounted to the definite triumph of Austrofascism. What was the ‘corporative state’, Austrian style? How did it establish its supremacy, and what did it mean for democracy and the Social-Democratic movement? What role did the Heimwehr play?

The vision of a harmonious social structure based on the principles of corporatism already existed as an ideology in Austria since 1918. However, it only found passionate advocates during the second half of the 1920s – initially in academic circles (e.g. the philosopher Othmar Spann, the legal historian Karl Hugelman, the historians Hans Hirsch and Heinrich von Srbik, the geographer Hugo Hassinger, the Germanist Josef Nadler, and the palaeontologist Othenio Abel), and later among politicians embittered by the crisis (e.g. Karl Lugmayr and Leopold Kunschak). Its supporters aspired to abolish the bourgeois democratic system and replace it with a corporative state equipped with a strong apparatus of power. Sectional interests of individuals and social groups were to be subordinated to the common interest of state and community. The intention was to establish an authoritarian state whose social structure would be based not on classes, but on professional sectors (corporations, interest groups) functioning in a hierarchical order (federal state, region, commune, borough and village – all sectors were to be equal). This was based on the utopian premise that it was possible to achieve a unity of interests between producers and capitalists within every professional sector and use the goals of the respective sectors for the common good. This, it was hoped, would end class struggle.

In consideration of the above, it is necessary to draw attention to 1930s Austria, the ideology of Austrofascism, and the ‘corporative state’ led by Dollfuss and Schuschnigg. Anti-democratic tendencies were already on the rise from 1926, when the ‘iron chancellor’, Ignaz Seipel, ruled the country with an iron fist. Seipel believed that all political parties ought to be dissolved – he considered them obstacles impeding the smooth functioning of government. Accomplishing this depended on two factors, the main factor being the existence of a political and military force interested in the destruction of democracy. The secondary factor was the need for an ideology that would justify such a venture.

90 Compare Kluge 1984, pp. 46–7.
91 For the influence of Austrofascist ideology on academic circles, compare Staudinger 1984b, p. 289.
92 Compare Pelinka 1972, p. 26.
Indeed, the Heimwehr precisely constituted such a force from its conception. Major capitalists and large estate holders endorsed it. The church also helped to suppress any symptoms of liberal tendencies in politics and the economy. To protect its own economic and political investments, the Heimwehr supported the idea of the ‘corporative state’ as chartered by Dollfuss and became a pillar of his government as the fascist system was fortified. The ‘corporative state’ was the most extensive, but not the sole, aspect of Austrofascist ideology. Autocracy, elitism, anti-democratism, anti-Marxism, clericalism and nationalism were further components. Zöllner writes:

One has to hand it to Dollfuss that the professional sector orientation was consistent with his actual beliefs. It did not simply draw on fascist ideology, but rather also drew on a socially conservative tradition adopted from Seipel – although Dollfuss was fond of stressing its basic consistence with the ideas contained in the papal encyclicals, *Rerum novarum* by Pope Leo XIII and *Quadragesimo anno* by Pius XI.93

What this ideology shared with classical fascism was the construction of the state’s overriding role with respect to the nation, social groups, and individuals. It assumed that the state was ‘omnipotent’ in economic and political life, if not in intellectual life. It was a reactionary, conservative ideology, which served to validate government suppression of the opposition – the SDAP, KPÖ, and NSDAP, to name but a few of the organisations that were subjected to persecution. As Staudinger observes, its nationalism was its only positive component, considering the political balance of forces in Europe. It protected Austria’s political sovereignty against Germany’s annexation pledges.94 All the same, this aspect of Austrofascist ideology did not amount to any significant social transformations because the popular masses were excluded from public life when parliament was dissolved. There was another reason as to why Austrofascist nationalism could not fulfil its intended duties. As Staudinger writes:

This German ideology of ‘Austria’ was unsuitable for reinforcing existing Austrian patriotic trends in their own ranks. The complicated intellectual stylisation of the corporative ‘Austria’ ideology alone did not exactly further its broad reception. What is more, its insistence on Austria’s belong-

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93 Zöllner 1979, p. 514.
94 See Staudinger 1984b, p. 311.
ing to the German nation not only failed to encourage an emerging formulation of Austrian national consciousness (Ernst Karl Winter), it virtually suppressed it. Our translation

On 19 August 1933 in Riccione, Dollfuss, who was hoping for a future congruous with Italy, broached an agreement with Mussolini that committed him to a corporative constitution. During the period in which the authoritarian constitution was finalised, a feat that lasted almost a year, only four important organisations prevailed on Austria’s political stage; the Christian Social Party, the Fatherland Front set up by the government (which merged with associations which supported Austrian independence), the Greater German People’s Party, and the Heimwehr. The May constitution (30 April–1 May 1934) supported by these groups introduced the following reforms: professional sectors were subject to strict state control, authoritarian virtues granted to the chancellor, the government became the central authority in political decisions, bans on plebiscites, strikes, and demonstrations. There was no place for the Heim-

95 Ibid. Staudinger cites another important factor which weakened the influence of the ‘Austria’ ideology: ‘Without a doubt, the corporative “Austria” ideology was intended to play a defensive role against trends that desired a union with National Socialist Germany. Evaluating the defensive power of this ideology, however, one must note that it had no such effect. The weakness of its defensive power cannot be explained merely by citing the phenomenon of the National Socialist Anschluss policy’s success, but primarily by pointing to the “Austria” ideology’s inadequate character given the effect it aspired to have. Its weakness is found in the very attempt to compete with National Socialism to achieve similar goals – i.e. to establish and organise a great empire, lead German culture, and cultivate “German folk traditions”, including abroad. To obtain these aims, the political power basis held by Germany had an incomparably stronger appeal than the Austrian position’ (our translation) – Ibid.

96 Mussolini’s influence in Austria became more significant after the signing of the ‘Rome protocols’ on 17 March 1934. The Italian leverage was unpopular among Austrians. Mussolini’s fascist decrees received no applause, and the Duce’s policies in South Tyrol provoked aversion and fear.

97 The ‘Constitution 1934’ was unanimously decreed by the council of ministers on 30 April 1934. It was ratified by the provisional parliament (76 of 165 delegates). The constitution was to transfigure the democratic republic, Austria, into an authoritarian corporative state. It was published in the ‘Federal Law Gazette for the State of Austria’ as no. 1 on 1 May 1934. Wereszycki points to the illegal character of this measure, explaining that according to the existing constitution of 1929, a constitutional change could only be decided by referendum, not by parliament.

The new constitution changed the official name of the country from ‘Republic Aus-
wehr in the new corporative state – once an indispensable aid in the struggle for power; it now stood in the way of authoritarian rule. Following a government decision in 1935, the Heimwehr was co-opted by the Fatherland Front and subjected to state control. On 9 October 1936, it was dissolved. Once the Heimwehr had been abolished and the NSDAP dissolved (1935), the process of implementing the Austrian dictatorship was accomplished.98 A question that Bauer himself posed in his analysis of Austrofascism arises: did the Dollfuss dictatorship have a truly fascist character comparable to Hitler's and Mussolini's? This was definitely not the case, even if, as Steiner points out, answers to this

tria’ to ‘Federal State of Austria’. The organised professional sectors of the authoritarian state replaced the democratic republican form. The organisational principle was that the organs of the state were not appointed ‘from below’ in general elections, but ‘from above’ by higher bodies. Unlike in parliamentary democracy, it was not the legislative organs, but the highest executive bodies that exerted definite influence over the actions of representative bodies in the federal states. The executive bodies were subordinate to the government led by the chancellor, and the constitution gave the chancellor the power to decide over the political line.

With regard to state legislation, four advisory bodies were created (the state council, state economy council, state council of culture, and district council). Their purpose was to assess laws prepared through these organs and pass their assessment on to the government. The assessment was not binding for the government; it could make its own decisions. Furthermore, the constitution envisaged the appointment of a parliament consisting of 49 members of the advisory bodies (in reality, however, this parliament never met). Parliament had the right to vote on laws, yet this right was limited to either accepting or rejecting proposals submitted by the government in its unadulterated form.

The legislative sections of the individual federal states (the state parliaments or Landtag) consisted of the elected representatives of cultural communities and professional sectors (however, no elections ever materialised). The federal state governments and mayor of Vienna were appointed and recalled by the federal president, who, in turn, was to be elected by an assembly of all mayors. The federal president had the right to appoint and recall the chancellor.

The reality was that no federal president elections took place during the entire period of corporative state power from 1934–8 because the president’s term of office was extended (he had been elected in 1934). The federal president had no authority over the chancellor, who exercised his power in a dictatorial fashion. Compare Adamovich and Spanner 1957, pp. 33–5. See also Zöllner 1979, p. 515.

98 Botz distinguishes three phases of this dictatorship: (1) the phase of the late parliamentary government (May 1932–March 1933); (2) the phase of authoritarian semi-dictatorship and increasing fascisisation (until January 1934); (3) the phase of advanced semi-fascist authoritarian dictatorship (until October 1935 or mid-1936); before (4) the final phase of partial defascisisation and bureaucratically ossified corporatism. See Botz 1984, pp. 320–7.
question are polarised.\textsuperscript{99} It was an authoritarian dictatorship that disregarded any rule of law; it was based on a narrow group of powerful individuals supporting each other and employing means of force (police and the army), yet it was doubtlessly not a totalitarian dictatorship. It never degenerated into one ruler’s power over the minds and souls of the population, nor was this its purpose. Rather, the regime was interested in keeping individuals and social groups in line for the price of restricting and infringing their political, social, and civil liberties. It is worth highlighting that the ‘corporative state’ was unable to function in practice and did not abolish the existing social antagonisms. As Kluge also stated, the system saw the professional sector groups sharply collide with the government and Fatherland Front.\textsuperscript{100} The Catholic Church sustained its position and organisation, and the Catholic workers’ movement enjoyed freedom in the corporative state. The Nazis too influenced the state’s political and economic silhouette. The real victim of the authoritarian regime was, consistently with the intentions of its founders, the socialist workers’ movement, which it deprived of all and any legal institutions to defend its interests. Among other reasons, this was possible because the parliamentary democratic system in itself does not offer sufficient protection from attacks by anti-democratic forces if political parties are not genuinely willing to democratise social life. The example of Austrian Social Democracy, which was influential in 1930 and lost any practical significance in 1934, illustrates this point succinctly.

The liquidation of the legal party fundamentally weakened the workers’ movement, even if it did not mean a complete abandonment of struggle on the part of the Austrian Social Democrats just yet. An illegal organisation named Revolutionary Socialists (rs) was formed on the initiative of the former editors of the \textit{Arbeiter-Zeitung}, Pollack and Leichter.\textsuperscript{101} In spite of existing programmatic and generational differences, it considered itself the successor to the old party.\textsuperscript{102} That being said, it was unable to win the support of the masses

\textsuperscript{99} See Steiner 2004, pp. 33–133, where the author illustrates various classifications of the Austrian regime reflected in the works of many postwar and contemporary historians and political scientists – such as Botz, Hanisch, Bracher, Gulick, Clemenz, Holtmann, Talos, Hozer, Carsten, Nolte, Payne, Ludwig, Reichhold, and his own (2004, pp. 133–293) – and points out their differences.

\textsuperscript{100} See Kluge 1984, p. 87.

\textsuperscript{101} In 1933, Communist underground circles influenced by ‘Neu Beginnen’ emerged, e.g. the groups Funke, Rote Front, and Weissel were born.

\textsuperscript{102} Renner was particularly hostile to the emergence of the party. He was convinced that illegal resistance was futile and dismissed the rs as a merger of left socialists and Communists as opposed to the sdap’s heirs. See Hannak 1965, p. 625.
and become a significant political bulwark. During the first phase of the organisation’s development, the ‘time of revenge and romanticism’, according to Gulick, the Revolutionary Socialists were striking in their verbal radicalism and undue faith in the imminent outbreak of the anti-fascist revolution. In reality, their activity was confined to three duties: helping the families of combatants who had fallen in the uprising; anti-fascist propaganda; and training new recruits – none of which weakened the Austrofascist dictatorship. Lack of decisiveness with respect to programmatic lines and positions on the February 1934 uprising defined the leaders of the new party in the Bauer-led foreign office in Bern.

From the dawn of the party’s existence, Bauer’s standpoint was as follows: ‘Political emigration can only flee from this fate ... [I]t can only become anything other than the flotsam and jetsam of history to the extent it is capable of serving the illegal movement at home and fulfil functions that can only be fulfilled from abroad’. That is to say, Bauer recognised the new leadership and refrained from overseeing the organisation himself. It also meant that aid for the socialists at home would be limited to financial dividends and advocacy. Behind this was not simply Bauer’s belief that an illegal movement could not be directed from an outside agent, but also a self-critical assessment of his own failed politics, and a partial change in his views on the role of the workers’ party in the age of fascism. His posthumously published text, The Illegal Party, attested to the fact that Bauer had lost faith in a rebirth of the old party, advoc-

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103 ‘Despite important successes, organisational consolidation, and ideological stabilisation, the Revolutionary Socialists’ immobility in relation to forming alliances rendered them incapable of playing any political role in the struggle for Austria’s future’ (our translation) – Butterwegge 1990, p. 534.
104 Information according to Botz 1978b, p. 363.
105 The illegal paper of the RS was named Die Revolution. According to Holtmann, it was published irregularly – twice a month at most – and its circulation was an estimated 10,000–15,000. See Holtmann 1996, p. 1996.
106 Its vacillations were a symptom of attempting to define the relationship between the old and new party, especially with regard to questions of leadership and the degree of collaboration.
107 Bauer 1939, p. 512.
108 His attitude towards the new party was transparent: ‘We, the old guard, cannot take up this task from them. However, we have a duty to pass on the experience, knowledge, and values that we acquired through our work and our struggles. We need to pass it on so it may merge with the new knowledge and values that come out from the life and struggles of the new movement that emerged under the pressures of fascism’ (our translation) – Bauer 1976p, p. 325.
ating instead the emergence of a new organisation with a different structure and ideology.\(^{109}\) He recommended forming a party of a proletarian character similar to the Leninist model: a narrow, disciplined, hierarchic cadre organisation based on democratic centralism. Much like Lenin, he aspired to grant this party the monopoly of leading the working class. Unlike the Bolshevik leader, however, he did not go so far as to conflate this task with lawlessness and lack of accountability to the masses. However, Bauer’s position within party activity was not entirely clear. Aside from employing Leninist phraseology when, for instance, referring to the party as a combat organisation, he also spoke of the momentous historical importance and continuity of the old ideas in the new movement. According to Maimann, Bauer’s ambiguity followed a certain logic: he wanted to nurture the revolutionary character of the new party to prevent former SDAP members from drifting towards Communism; at the same time, by acquainting the party with its tradition, he wanted to create a premise upon which the old and new wings could co-operate.\(^{110}\) Bauer attempted to overcome the split in the party at a convention of confidantes in Blansko near Brünn in the autumn of 1934.\(^{111}\) Although it succeeded in the short-term, long-term co-operation between the two factions proved impossible because of divergent programmatic positions. In 1935, the leadership of the RS relinquished the radicalism it had cultivated in its early stages, speaking critically of Léon Blum’s popular front in France, which the ‘old guard’ supported. It also expressed scepticism over the changes in the Soviet Union and the possibility of unifying the international workers’ movement. Likewise, the party’s initial confidence in the triumph of the anti-fascist struggle was soon dispelled.\(^{112}\) The Revolutionary Socialists’ trajectory inspired impassioned protest from Bauer, who accused their leaders of spreading pessimism and fatalism in the ranks of the working class.\(^{113}\) Bauer felt personally hurt when the Revolutionary Socialists criticised

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\(^{109}\) Marschalek depicts Bauer’s model of the illegal party engagingly in Marschalek 1990, pp. 41–4.

\(^{110}\) Compare Maimann 1985, p. 232.

\(^{111}\) For a few months, the party adopted the name United Socialist Party Austria. See Wandruszka 1954, p. 468.

\(^{112}\) The relationship between the two parties soured after the congress in Brünn, which Bauer and Friedrich Adler attended. 28 congress attendees were detained for treason and convicted in 1936. Among those condemned to 25 years in prison was Kreisky, who was, however, soon released.

\(^{113}\) See Bauer 1980dd, p. 209. Goller elaborates on the conflict between Bauer and Buttinger over programmatic and tactical differences between the old and new parties in Goller 2008, pp. 96–100. Otto Leichter supported Bauer’s position – see Leichter 1937, p. 342.
him for his indecisive politics and contradiction between words and deeds. For him, the new party was a sect, and he demanded that the illegal movement refrain from critically examining the party’s past. He could never bring himself to pass honest judgement of the SDAP leadership or acknowledge its fatalist nature.

During his time of emigration, Bauer remained adamant about the concept of ‘integral socialism’, which intended to unite the Social-Democratic and Communist tendencies. Hence, he attentively followed the tense relationship between the RS and the Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ). There were controversies primarily concerned with the creation of a popular front within both organisations. The KPÖ had approached the SDAP as early as 1933 with this proposal, and it renewed its offer when approaching the Revolutionary Socialists following the February events. After its ban, the KPÖ vastly shifted its emphasis and modified its strategic and tactical paradigms. Party members forewent their accusations that Social Democracy had collaborated with the fascists. After the uprising was vanquished and a section of SDAP and Schutzbund members had joined the Communists, the KPÖ commenced efforts to unite the workers’ movement.114 What the KPÖ and RS had in common was their struggle against fascism and the illegal character of their activities, yet the suggestion to form a united front under Communist leadership did not receive corroboration from the Revolutionary Socialists.115 The Revolutionary Socialists rejected the principle of a unified organisational structure for all countries, vying instead for the unity of all classes and social groups within the respective nation. From 1934–6, Bauer agreed with this and accused the Communists of spreading centralist tendencies. He was conscious that the majority of parties affiliated to the LSI did not desire any co-operation with the Comintern.116 The second half of the 1930s did not see a formal alliance or even loose coordination of activities between the two groups. Bauer, who regarded this as

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114 See Kolenig 1934, p. 185.
115 The popular front question was brought up once again at the seventh congress of the Comintern in 1935, where Dimitrov justified the necessity of forming a united anti-fascist front. See Dimitrov 1960.
116 This was confirmed in September 1935. The Comintern advocated united action against Italy’s imminent attack on Ethiopia. The French, Italian, Spanish, Swiss and Austrian parties, the Mensheviks and the Jewish Bund accepted the invitation. The British, Dutch, Swedish, Danish and both Czechoslovak parties rejected it decisively. However, Bauer’s suggested solution – namely that the parties calling for co-operation with the Communists should go ahead of their own accord – was not accepted. No united actions were undertaken as the LSI executive rejected Moscow’s offer. See Brügel 1978, p. 12.
positive, distanced himself from any efforts to create a united front. He did so not least under the impression of the Moscow show trials of 1936.

Simultaneously, Schuschnigg’s policies had weakened the Austrian middle classes. After the dissolution of the Heimwehr, a shift of power took place in the Christian Social Party benefiting the Fatherland Front and Greater German party. Because of his aversion to democracy and social pluralism, Schuschnigg adhered to the ‘German path’, thus decisively, if unintentionally, paving the way for National Socialism. Schuschnigg’s 11 July 1936 agreement with Hitler was an important milestone on this path. Ostensibly, the leaders signed to reinforce friendly relations between the two countries. Yet in fact, Austria, which had not received any support from Italy since 1936, had to grant serious concessions to Nazi Germany – essentially, the agreement handed the country over to Nazi jurisdiction. After the failed 12 February negotiations with Hitler, Schuschnigg made a final attempt to save Austria’s independence by decreeing a referendum for a ‘free, independent, German, and Christian Austria’. The two illegal parties, the KPÖ and RS, announced their support for the referendum, even if they did not believe that the clerical-fascist government’s resistance against German Nazism would be successful, given that Schuschnigg eschewed the support of the working class and the state power rested solely on the police. The anticipated plebiscite, to which Bauer attached great hope, never had a chance to take place. On 11 March 1938, German troops marched into Austria and forced Schuschnigg to surrender unconditionally. The National-Socialist government formed on 13 March with German consent appealed to the ‘extraordinary powers’ implemented in 1934 and introduced a new constitution, according to which Austria was incorporated into the German Reich. No lawful act legitimised Austria’s occupation – it was a forceful annexation. That said, the majority of Austrian society welcomed the Anschluss with enthusiasm. It is important to remember that this stage in the history of the country was the result of many years of passive Social-Democratic politics, the counter-revolutionary offensive

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117 By virtue of this agreement, Germany recognised Austria’s full independence, while the Austrian government proclaimed that its principle was to build Austria as a German state. It furthermore committed itself to counter anti-Hitler propaganda and liquidate Heimwehr units hostile to Hitler and Nazism.

118 See Adamovich and Spanner 1957, p. 35.

119 The citizens of Graz, who welcomed Hitler’s annexation with great warmth, may serve as an example. The Third Reich awarded Graz the title, ‘the city of the people’s uprising’. However, there is no clear record as to how many Austrians supported Hitler’s annexation – not least because some of those hostile to the NSDAP nonetheless supported the Anschluss.
of the bourgeois parties, and the weakness of the parliamentary system. It was these factors which allowed the ‘black fascists’ to seize power years before the annexation, thus creating a broad framework for the development of Nazism, which could then effortlessly erase the competition from the political arena.

Following Austria's annexation to Germany, Bauer’s writings in emigration focused on apologia for the anti-fascist revolution, which he saw as a consequence of the accomplished annexation. As has been previously mentioned, the demand for Anschluss was an integral part of the programme of Austrian Social Democracy. True, the political situation forced the Social Democrats to expunge this point from their programme in 1933; but this by no means amounted to an end to the party’s Germanophilia. For some Austrian socialists, Bauer included, Hitler’s Anschluss was a ‘tragedy of history’ – but that did not stop them from viewing it as historical progress, as well as considering German revenge for the Allied dictates of St. Germain and Versailles politically justified. Bauer supported this assessment, which was ambivalent in a manner that is typical of the Austrian mentality. It is not unreasonable to state that Bauer’s take on Hitler’s Anschluss was ambiguous. Emotionally, he genuinely perceived it as an assault on Austria’s independence. As a politician, he anticipated its consequence: war. One may not ignore, however, that Bauer’s anxieties, resulting from being a minority in isolation and coupled with a loss of faith in the ability of his country to survive, had only amassed following the defeat of national revolutions and the rise of fascism in Europe. These factors had already preoccupied his socio-political thinking in the 1920s, and their presence thrived in emigration. They certainly had a crucial impact on his support for Austria’s Anschluss to Germany in the form of an anti-fascist and socialist revolution in the final period of his life.

If one wants to understand the meaning of the appeal Bauer made in his articles, ‘Kann Österreich noch gerettet werden?’ (‘Can Austria Still Be Saved?’), ‘Nach der Annexion’ (‘After the Annexation’), and ‘Österreichs Ende’ (‘Austria’s End’), which were also the author’s political testament, then it is important to take his motives into consideration. The most important of them, based on the political situation after World War I, was his desire to transform the war into an anti-fascist revolution from which a new, united, socialist Europe would emerge. Like a few other German Social Democrats in exile and the left wing

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120 As Maimann also acknowledges, ‘The hope for an anti-fascist revolution is a recurring theme throughout [Bauer’s] entire history of political exile during Nazism’ (our translation) – Maimann 1985, p. 234.
121 See 1980gg, p. 834.
122 See ‘Interview mit Karl Renner’, Neues Wiener Tagblatt, 3 April 1938.
of the British Labour Party, he was still convinced that Germany would be a revolutionary hotbed. According to Bauer, ‘the German revolution will have to defend the unity of the German people and Reich not only against capitalist counter-revolution in Germany, but also against counter-revolutionary intervention by imperialist powers’ (our translation). Based on this, on 31 March 1938, the KPÖ and RS called for an armed uprising against Hitler’s annexation, which Bauer dismissed as a counter-revolutionary threat against the socialist revolution. In opposition, he declared annexation the main premise of the all-German revolution. He sharply criticised the Communists and their ambitions for independence in ‘After the Annexation’, and the Revolutionary Socialists and theirs in ‘Austria’s End’. He wrote:

We cannot turn back the wheel of world history. Only Germany’s defeat in war could tear Austria away from the German Reich again, but any German defeat in war would unleash the German revolution, and socialism would not tear Austria away from the German revolution. The future of the Austrian working class, then, is not in any kind of Austrian separatism. The German-Austrian working class can only be liberated if the whole German working class is liberated. The future of the German-Austrian working class is in the future of the German revolution.

These words of Bauer’s were vehemently rebuked by Ernst Bloch, who accused the Austrian socialist of being unable to tell the difference – self-evident to national-minded Austrians – between voluntary union to a democratic Germany and Hitler’s annexation. It is difficult to fully concur with the philosopher’s view. A more appropriate assessment would be that the interpretations of Anschluss by both Bauer and Hitler were by no means the same, even if Bauer rated Hitler’s annexation of Austria as historically and socially progress-

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123 Bauer 1980hh, p. 858.
124 Bauer 1980gg, p. 844. In this article, Bauer argued that while it was an economic necessity to preserve Austria within the framework of the Reich, as it would end structural unemployment, this aspect was secondary.
125 Bloch, in Neue Welttribüne, 7 July 1938.
126 In the article, ‘Austria’s End’, Bauer referred to the annexation as the ‘German union in fascist slavery’ – see Bauer 1980gg, p. 9. In ‘After the Annexation’, he wrote: ‘The union we all wanted was Austria’s incorporation into the German Reich by Austrian people’s free will. The annexation we have seen is the violent subjugation of the Austrian people by a superior armed power’ (our translation) – Bauer 1980hh, p. 855.
ive when confronted with the accomplished fact. What is more, the difference between his position and that of Renner on this question was minimal despite their divergent theoretical justifications.

The pathos and self-assuredness with which Bauer spoke about the imminent revolution in his final articles raise a number of questions. Firstly, on what did Bauer base his assumption of an anti-fascist insurrection in Germany, what did he fail to take into account, and what did he overestimate? Secondly, did he truly believe in his own vision of Europe's future, given the Schuschnigg-Hitler agreement, mass arrests of Communists and socialists, deportations of Jews, and concentration camps? Did he really believe that the hypnotic power of socialism could compete against fascist propaganda and expansion?\(^{127}\)

Like most European Social Democrats, Bauer spent a lifetime overestimating the German workers' movement's capabilities of organisation, its possibilities, and its willingness to act. The theoretical and political leadership of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany obliquely conditioned this. One can hardly blame him, but from the perspective of exile, he was unable to make a realistic analysis of the illegal organisations' room for manoeuvre under the conditions of fascism. The same is the case for the working class's susceptibility to fascist rhetoric. Furthermore, his perspective blinded him to the reality that fascism had solidified itself and sent its political opponents to camps or had them assassinated. On the other hand, it is difficult to believe that an experienced politician and expert on the national question such as Bauer would be uninformed about the growing nationalism in the German and Austrian working classes and Social-Democratic parties. Likewise, it is improbable that he was inattentive to the causes of lost national revolutions and the resulting legacies. His misrecognition of these factors and their consequences was psychological. Bauer was a fanatical revolutionary, even if his fanaticism was of a different variety to Lenin's. It was the fanaticism of a man obsessed with the idea of freedom, who dogmatically and one-sidedly conflated it with socialism, and therefore also with revolution as a tool with which to realise the ideal. What is more, Bauer was incapable of critically assessing his own perception of history, and he could not come to terms with the demise of the SDAP's political vision and the end of the Austromarxist doctrine. Likewise, he was unable to forgo his revolutionary rhetoric, which accompanied him his entire life and consistently contained hollow formulas, something that he failed to acknowledge.

\(^{127}\) Maimann poses similar questions in the aforementioned article and answers in the negative. See Maimann 1985, p. 235.
The recollections of his party comrades and his dispersed notes are evidence that Bauer never lost his faith in socialism's appeal. This was the case even though he lived to see the demise of his lifetime achievements, i.e. the defeat of the party, growing pessimism in the illegal movement, and Stalin and Hitler's intensifying terrorism. That he suddenly died after all his hopes had been squashed seems to confirm that he truly embodied his beliefs. It is difficult to tell whether he would have stuck to these had he lived to witness the Hitler-Stalin pact, the annexation of Polish territories to the Soviet Union, and the forceful creation of the bloc of countries on which ‘really existing socialism’ was imposed. It is not the task of historians to indulge in such speculations. Hence, it is fitting to conclude this analysis of Bauer’s thought where death put an end to it.