

## The Austrian Communist's dealing with the Ideological and Territorial Conflicts in the Alps-Adriatic Region (1945–1955)<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract – The Austrian Communist's dealing with the Ideological and Territorial Conflicts in the Alps-Adriatic Region (1945–1955)

*The essay provides a detailed analysis of the Communist Party of Austria's (KPÖ) policy in relation to the events in the Alps-Adriatic region after WWII. The territorial dispute between Austria and Yugoslavia over Carinthia shows the gap between national politics and internationalism at the heart of the strategy pursued by this communist party. In fact, while the KPÖ openly praised the achievements of Yugoslavian socialism and supported its claims on Trieste, it rejected Belgrade's territorial demands on Austria. The relationship between the two parties, however, developed quite positively until Stalin's break with Tito. Although part of the party was incredulous with respect to the denunciation that Tito was a traitor to communism, the KPÖ still chose the path of total alignment with Stalin's dictation. In the case of South Tyrol, however, the Austrian party first demanded the right of self-determination and thereafter, in 1946, sought to install itself as a leading force in the region, referring to the possibility of creating a section of the KPÖ south of the Brenner. However, the PCI proved determined not to leave the rather limited reins of South Tyrolean communism in Austrian hands.*

**Key words:** communism, Austria, Yugoslavia, border studies

**Parole chiave:** comunismo, Austria, Jugoslavia, studi di confine

### Introduction

Researching the history of the Austrian Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Österreichs*, KPÖ) is always paper chase. There is no party archive comparable to the other communist parties of the Alps-Adriatic region<sup>2</sup>. To fill this gap one has always to rely on the literary remains of later expelled party members<sup>3</sup>, as well

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<sup>2</sup> In comparison to the party archives listed in footnote 4, the *Zentrales Parteiarchiv der KPÖ*, Alfred-Klahr-Gesellschaft, Vienna, contains only limited information on the international relations of the Austrian Communists.

<sup>3</sup> The abatements of Paul Frischauer, Josef Meisel, Egon Kodicek, Josef Lauscher, Fred Margulies, Leopold Spira and (in part) Ernst Fischer are situated in the archive of the *Österreichische Gesellschaft für Zeitgeschichte* that can be consulted in the library of the Department of Contemporary History of the University of Vienna. Further materials by Bruno Frei and Franz Marek can be found in the *Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes* and the literary remains of Ernst Fischer (containing a lot of correspondence) are part of the *Österreichisches Literaturarchiv* of the Austrian National Library.

as archival sources of other communist parties who documented the policy of the Austrian communists and wrote minutes on their conversations with their Austrian «comrades»<sup>4</sup>. However, when dealing with the politics of the KPÖ in the Alps-Adriatic region in many cases the analysis has to be based on published materials of Austrian communists.

In retrospect, the decade from 1945 to 1955 was the most successful period in the entire history of the KPÖ, not least because the party was represented in the Austrian parliament from 1945 to 1959 and from 1945 to 1947 even in governmental responsibility. In contemporaneous perspective, the Austrian Communists were disappointed by their electoral performance, because (despite Soviet help) they did not manage to gain more than five percent of the overall votes. Lacking the tradition of a workers' party and burdened by its close relationship to the Soviet occupation power – detested by a vast majority of Austrians – the KPÖ never managed to gain a significant voter base. Already the first free elections in November 1945 brought to light that the KPÖ would remain an outcast of Austrian politics. Its position in the coalition government of Chancellor Leopold Figl was much weaker, than it had been in the provisional government headed by Karl Renner until early December 1945. Steadily growing anti-communism contributed to the KPÖ's early failure to establish itself as an influential political force in postwar Austria. This was due to brutal Soviet behavior in the first period of occupation and the frightening political developments in Austria's neighborhood. Therefore, the credit the Communists had won in their resistance against fascism, decayed quickly. Additionally, like in the interwar period, the explicitly anti-communist Socialist Party (*Sozialistische Partei Österreichs*, SPÖ) continued to be the main pole of attraction for Austrian workers and lured away temporary Communist followers irritated by the shape of Austrian and Soviet Communism. Despite being obedient to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the Soviet occupation forces, the KPÖ had to take a position supportive of the state until it left the government in 1947. We have to keep in mind this context when explaining the Austrian communists' policies in the first post war years<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> For the topic in discussion the Archivio del Partito comunista italiano, Fondazione Istituto Gramsci (APCI), Rome, Serie Estero; and Arhiv Jugoslavije, Belgrade, Fond CK SKJ are most important. Additionally, the East German sources on the KPÖ are also very helpful: Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisation der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv Berlin (SAPMO-BArch). Of course, Russian Archives are also important. For published documents on the KPÖ, see *Sowjetische Politik in Österreich 1945-1955: Dokumente aus russischen Archiven*, a c. di W. Mueller et al., ÖAW, Wien 2005; *Die Rote Armee in Österreich. Sowjetische Besetzung 1945-1955. Dokumente*, a c. di S. Karner et al., Oldenbourg, Graz 2005.

<sup>5</sup> On the KPÖ 1945-55, see W. Mueller, *Die sowjetische Besetzung in Österreich 1945-1955 und ihre politische Mission*, Böhlau, Wien 2005; W. Mueller, *Genosse Filippov und seine österreichischen «Freunde»: Fallstudien zur «Macht der Schwachen» im Verhältnis zwischen der KPdSU und einer Bruderpartei*, in *Osteuropa vom Weltkrieg bis zur Wende*, a c. di W. Mueller, M. Portmann, ÖAW, Wien 2007, pp. 133-60; W. Mueller, *Die gescheiterte Volksdemokratie. Zur Österreich-Politik von KPÖ und Sowjetunion 1945 bis 1955*, in *«Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung»*, 2005, pp. 141-70; F. Keller, *Die KPÖ 1945-1955*, in *«Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung»*, 1994, pp. 104-21; M. Mugrauer, *Die Politik der KPÖ 1945 bis 1955/56*,

*The South Tyrol question: from a rather national attitude towards internationalism*

After the end of World War II, the German-speaking people of South Tyrol once again started to demand their right of self-determination. North Tyrol as a federal province of occupied Austria heavily supported this claim. Very soon, people and politics in Austria went even further by demanding the return of the whole South Tyrol region to Austria. When the first regional and national initiatives started to address the Allied occupation powers in that regard by September 1945, the decision on the future status virtually had already been made. On 14 September 1945, the foreign ministers of the victorious powers had decided in London that the border should remain unchanged; only minor rectifications seemed feasible. However, the – at that time still unrecognized – Austrian government was not informed about the decision. Hence, South Tyrol became a major topic on the domestic political theatre. Starting in Innsbruck, soon spreading over the entire republic, mass events were organized, demanding the return of South Tyrol and Austrian media joined this chorus. Austria's impotent and hardly existing foreign policy was not able to make some profit out of that spirit, but on the domestic theatre it was inevitable to publicly demand the return of South Tyrol<sup>6</sup>. Hence, it is not surprising that the Austrian communists also acted that way. Like the Italian communists, in case of the South Tyrol question they took an entirely nationalist stance. The lack of primary sources on the decision making of the Austrian communists does not allow a definite interpretation of their motives. Keeping in mind the fact that the Soviet Union – as far as we now know – did not support the Austrian plea for the return of South Tyrol at all, we have to assume that the KPÖ took its position primarily due to domestic political reasons. The KPÖ was already burdened by its close relationship to the Soviet occupation power and had to face the November 1945 elections. Therefore, it supported the first mass movement of the reborn Austrian republic.

The Austrian communists were part of the provisional Austrian government that decided on 5 September to appeal to the Allied Commission for Austria with regard to the South Tyrol question. The governmental declaration deplored the unjust fate of South Tyrol after World War I, its fatal consequences for the German-speaking

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in *90 Jahre KPÖ. Studien zur Geschichte der Kommunistischen Partei Österreichs*, a c. di M. Mugrauer, Alfred Klahr Gesellschaft, Wien 2009, pp. 37-52. For an overview on the historiography on the KPÖ, see M. Mugrauer, *Die Kommunistische Partei Österreichs. Zum Stand der Forschung über die Geschichte der KPÖ*, in «Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung», 2013, pp. 211-34.

<sup>6</sup> On the South Tyrol question 1945-47, see R. Steininger, *Autonomie oder Selbstbestimmung? Die Südtirolfrage 1945/46 und das Gruber-De Gasperi-Abkommen*, StudienVerlag, Innsbruck 2006; V. Stadlmayer, *Kein Kleingeld im Länderschacher. Südtirol, Triest und Alcide De Gasperi 1945/1946*, Universitätsverlag Wagner Innsbruck 2002; M. Gehler, *Gescheiterte Selbstbestimmung. Die Südtirolfrage, das Gruber-De Gasperi-Abkommen und seine Aufnahme in den italienischen Friedensvertrag 1945-1947*, StudienVerlag, Innsbruck 2011; M. Gehler, *Keine Einigung mit Trient und Sondierungen zwischen Bozen, Rom und Wien 1947*, StudienVerlag, Innsbruck 2016; M. Gehler, *Verspielte Selbstbestimmung? Die Südtirolfrage 1945/46 in US-Geheimdienstberichten und österreichischen Akten*, Universitätsverlag Wagner, Innsbruck 1996; *Südtirol – Stunde Null? Kriegsende 1945-1946*, a c. di H. Heiss, G. Pfeifer, StudienVerlag, Innsbruck 2000.

minority in Italy as well as Austrian–Italian relations and demanded a plebiscite on the future territorial belonging of the region<sup>7</sup>.

Unsurprisingly the notion of communist media differed from that of the other parties. By highlighting the communists' fight for Austrian freedom and independence during World War II, the KPÖ now demanded the return of South Tyrol for the same reasons. It demanded a lasting settlement based on the language boundary and not according to «military, chauvinist or imperialist considerations»<sup>8</sup>. Communist media also reflected international news coverage on South Tyrol<sup>9</sup> and massively supported the mass demonstrations for the return of South Tyrol<sup>10</sup>.

The position of the KPÖ did not change after the fatal defeat in the November elections, when the KPÖ gained only 5.4% of the overall votes. The communists remained part of the coalition government, even though their influence had declined. Somehow, they became an opposition within the government. In case of the South Tyrol question, they publicly supported the return of South Tyrol to Austria, but with the same breath, they criticized Austria's foreign policy in that regard<sup>11</sup>.

In a speech in May 1946, the leading intellectual and exceptionally gifted speaker Ernst Fischer<sup>12</sup> warned that disappointing the democratic hopes by denying the return of South Tyrol to Austria would be a mistake. Such a decision would hinder the strengthening of democracy against the remains of fascism. Fischer added that in the recent past a strong Austrian national consciousness would have constituted a bulwark against «German imperialism». The «wounds» of South Tyrol «can not be healed by any territorial exchange»; to Fischer only its return to Austria seemed suitable<sup>13</sup>. In the subsequent months, it became more and more obvious that all Austrian efforts bore no fruit. The KPÖ increasingly blamed foreign minister Karl Gruber for having failed in securing the return of South Tyrol<sup>14</sup>. Additionally, the first signs of the emerging Cold War became visible. The *Volksstimme* noted that Great Britain and the United States wanted a strong Italy as a counterbalance to the emerging Eastern camp: «This is one of the main reasons why they refused South Tyrol to the Austrians, and are also striving to bring Trieste under Italian suzerainty»<sup>15</sup>. The Allies were decisive, but it was easier to criticize the Austrian foreign minister.

In fact, Gruber's foreign policy was incoherent and in the end unsuccessful. Historians have debated about it for decades and this article is not going to add an-

<sup>7</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 7 September 1945, p. 1; «*Volksstimme*», 8 September 1945, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 15 September 1945, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 18 September 1945, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 2 October 1945, p. 1; «*Volksstimme*», 4 October 1945, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 24 April 1946, p. 2; «*Volksstimme*», 3 May 1946, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> On Fischer, see K. Kröhnke, *Ernst Fischer oder Die Kunst der Koexistenz*, Büchergilde Gutenberg, Frankfurt 1994; S. Baryli, *Zwischen Stalin und Kafka. Ernst Fischer von 1945 bis 1972*, Pahl-Rugenstein, Bonn 2008; *Ernst Fischer. Texte und Materialien*, a c. di B. Fetz, Sonderzahl, Wien 2000.

<sup>13</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 15 May 1946, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 24 May 1946, p. 1; «*Volksstimme*», 7 June 1946, p. 1; «*Volksstimme*», 4 July 1946, p. 2; «*Volksstimme*», 13 July 1946, p. 2; «*Volksstimme*», 26 July 1946, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 28 July 1946, p. 1.

other chapter to that debate»<sup>16</sup>. After it had been ultimately decided that the borders would remain unchanged, in September 1946 Austria and Italy negotiated the so-called Gruber-De Gasperi agreement, which was the basis for the future statute of autonomy and – even more important – for Austria becoming the protective power for the German speaking people of South Tyrol. However, the formulations of the agreement were quite vague. This fact was heavily criticized by the KPÖ. Additionally, it blamed Gruber for divulging the Austrian plea for a return of South Tyrol, without consulting and against the will of the Austrian parliament. Communist media concluded that to Gruber the struggle against communism at home was more important, than fighting for a return of South Tyrol<sup>17</sup>. In retrospect, the initial opposition of the Soviet Union against an Austrian–Italian agreement was interpreted as having been in the interest of the South Tyroleans<sup>18</sup>.

In the council of ministers on 1 October 1946, the only communist minister of the Austrian government Karl Altmann accepted that a return of South Tyrol was impossible at the moment, but he pointed out that the Italian Peace Treaty did not mean an end to the Austrian plea for self-determination in South Tyrol<sup>19</sup>. Additionally the KPÖ criticized that the agreement did not correspond to the interests of Austria and the «Austrian people» of South Tyrol, because its vague formulations did not guarantee autonomy and forced the representatives of South Tyrol to negotiate with the Italian state about the implementation of this highly vague treaty. Hence, its inclusion into the Italian Peace Treaty was criticized as well as the Austrian abandonment of its claims on South Tyrol<sup>20</sup>. The KPÖ's position remained national and primarily addressed the domestic audience, however, nationalistic manifestations were increasingly criticized.

We do not know much about the interactions between the Austrian and the Italian communists in the early postwar years. However, it is reported that they met frequently, for example, when Togliatti travelled to Moscow by train, he made a stopover in Vienna. The Austrian communist Heinrich Fritz reported that he was the only one to whom Togliatti spoke German during his hours in Vienna.<sup>21</sup> Obviously, Togliatti had his reasons for not using his «Komintern German» in the early postwar years. With regard to South Tyrol in the 1940s, there is hardly any documentation on exchange between KPÖ and PCI. The positioning of the KPÖ resulted in differences with the PCI about the territorial belonging of South Tyrol. After the Gruber-De Gasperi agreement, the KPÖ aimed at the foundation of an autonomous

<sup>16</sup> See works cited in footnote 5.

<sup>17</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 28 August 1946; «*Volksstimme*», 8 September 1946; «*Volksstimme*», 22 September 1946; «*Volksstimme*» 24 September 1946; «*Volksstimme*», 25 September 1946.

<sup>18</sup> *Problem Südtirol*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», 14 (1956), 11 (November), pp. 772-85, here pp. 776-77.

<sup>19</sup> *Sitzung des österreichischen Ministerrates am 1. Oktober 1946* (= Document 61) in Steininger, *Autonomie*, cit., pp. 348-54.

<sup>20</sup> *Anfang Oktober 1946: Stellungnahme der Landesstelle für Südtirol (Innsbruck) zum Gruber-De Gasperi-Abkommen* (= Document 70) in Steininger, *Autonomie*, cit., pp. 362-69, here pp. 367-68.

<sup>21</sup> Transcript of the interview (by Hans Schafranek) with Heinrich Fritz, part 4, *Kassette 2, Seite A* (III), p. 29, in *Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes*, Vienna.

South Tyrolean communist party with direct links to the PCI and the Tyrolean Section of the KPÖ<sup>22</sup>. In 1946-47 the Central Committee of the PCI supported the centralistic position of the communist resistance. Any concessions to the German speaking minority were hardly enforceable. The PCI had lost some popularity because of its positioning in the territorial disputes between Italy and Yugoslavia, the case of South Tyrol constituted a chance to regain support<sup>23</sup>.

In 1947, both the Austrian and the Italian communists left their national governments. Thereafter it was even easier to publicly criticize the Italian treatment of the German-speaking minority and the insufficient implementation of the statute of autonomy that went into effect in 1948 for the Trento, and the Bolzano region in which the German-speaking people in fact formed a minority<sup>24</sup>. By citing «l'Unità», the KPÖ accused De Gasperi for having breached his promise to the South Tyroleans. In this regard, there was no disagreement between the Austrian and the Italian communists<sup>25</sup>. However, it took until the 1950s when joint action of the Austrian and Italian communists in South Tyrol took place. At the beginning of the 1950s, the Italian communists had only a marginal societal basis in South Tyrol. Starting in 1951 they aimed at creating a «democratic German speaking mass movement» that was meant to contribute to a fraternal cohabitation together of German and Italian speaking populations of the Trentino-Alto Adige region formed in 1948. Despite being aware of the societal situation in South Tyrol, they aimed at a weakening of the South Tyrolean People's Party (*Südtiroler Volkspartei*, SVP), primarily because the conservative SVP on the national level collaborated closely with the Democrazia cristiana (DC). For the municipal and regional elections of 1952, both the Austrian and the Italian communist parties massively supported the electoral campaign of the South Tyrolean communists. The budget provided by Rome and Vienna amounted 5.7 million Lira. Already since October 1951, they financed a bi-monthly German magazine called «Der Südtiroler», that not surprisingly never reached a significant number of readers. In the course of the election campaign, it became obvious that there was only little interest for communist events among the South Tyrolean population. The deployment of Austrian lecturers was aborted very soon. For example, Ernst Fischer did not come to South Tyrol after the audience had remained limited on the occasion of the first lectures. Of course, the situation in the Bolzano region industrial zone was little different. The organizational level of the autonomous regional party section remained low. Communists felt isolated and discriminated in their private and professional environment. Several regional electoral lists for German and Italian speaking activists did not lead to any significant efforts

<sup>22</sup> Austria 4 marzo 1947/Vienna, copia dattiloscritta: il PC austriaco e la questione Sud-tirolese, APCI, Estero, mf. 144, fol. 969-970. For further details, see the article by Karlo Ruzicic-Kessler in this issue.

<sup>23</sup> J. Gatterer, *Männer des Friedens in die Gemeinden!. Wie Kommunisten aus Italien und Österreich 1952 damit begannen, in Südtirol eine «demokratische Massenbewegung» aufzubauen*, in «Alfred Klahr Gesellschaft. Mitteilungen», n. 20, 2013, 3, pp. 10-16, here p. 11

<sup>24</sup> R. Steininger, *Südtirol zwischen Diplomatie und Terror 1947-1969, vol. 1: 1947-1959*, Athesia, Bolzano 1999, pp. 19-120.

<sup>25</sup> *Problem Südtirol*, in «Weg und Ziel», 14 (1956), 11 (November), pp. 772-85, here p. 778.

in the 1952 elections. In 1953 again, a single list of the Italian communists was established and their electoral successes followed the results of the overall national level, however, starting from a far lower level. In the end, their efforts led to almost no success. The Communists in South Tyrol remained a minor group without any significant influence for decades to come. Due to travel restrictions, the KPÖ often was unable to assist the struggle of the PCI directly<sup>26</sup>.

When in 1953 as a result of a similar Italian claim in the question of Trieste, the South Tyrolean demand for a plebiscite returned on the agenda, the Austrian communists did not explain this with the interconnections between those two territorial disputes. Now they blamed «West German imperialism» for the return of this demand, the SVP and the Austrian government were regarded as its «stooges». The enragement was named ill-founded, since Austria had signed the Gruber-De Gasperi agreement, the KPÖ had always opposed<sup>27</sup>. In view of the Austrian communists, the PCI was the only political force that would guarantee the full implementation of the statute of autonomy. The KPÖ media joined the Italian communists' chorus of blaming the SVP for cooperating with the DC on the national level. The PCI's publicized understanding for the distrust of the German-speaking minority did, however, not lead to an increase of trust in the communists as a political force in South Tyrol<sup>28</sup>. In October 1956, Ernst Fischer once again blamed the «bourgeois» politicians for their surrender in the question of «self-determination». He opposed any foreign interventions. Since the agreement of 1946 was binding, Fischer demanded a «real autonomy» for the German-speaking South Tyrol and once again condemned the linkage with the Trentino. Despite this position, he spoke out against dramatizing the situation and called for a bilateral solution in the spirit of mutual understanding<sup>29</sup>. The only difference in the position of the Austrian and the Italian communists was that the latter were against a special autonomy for the Bolzano province the KPÖ kept calling for<sup>30</sup>. The main plea was an internationalist one: the «reformation of Italy» under a communist government would help the minorities the most<sup>31</sup>. Hence, this did not happen it remained an easy task to criticize all politicians and groups involved for not finding a solution and putting an end to terrorism throughout the 1960s<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> J. Gatterer, *Männer des Friedens in die Gemeinden!*, cit., pp. 10-16; on the further developments of left wing parties in South Tyrol, see J. Gatterer, *Rote milben im gefieder. Sozialdemokratische, kommunistische und grün-alternative Parteipolitik in Südtirol*, Studienverlag, Innsbruck 2009. For the KPÖ's news coverage on the 1952 elections, see «*Völkstimme*», 29 May 1952, p. 1. For more details, see the article by Karlo Ruzicic-Kessler in this issue.

<sup>27</sup> F. Strobl, *Das Fiasko mit Südtirol*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», 19 (1961), 11 (November), pp. 718-34.

<sup>28</sup> *Problem Südtirol*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», 14 (1956), 11 (November), pp. 772-85, here pp. 782-84.

<sup>29</sup> *Problem Südtirol*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», 14 (1956), 11 (November), pp. 772-85, here pp. 784-85.

<sup>30</sup> *Die italienischen Kommunisten und Südtirol*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», 17 (1959), 11 (November), pp. 749-54.

<sup>31</sup> F. Strobl, *Das Fiasko mit Südtirol*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», 19 (1961), 11 (November), pp. 718-34.

<sup>32</sup> *Zur Lage in Südtirol*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», 22 (1964), 12 (December), pp. 765-70.

*From friend to foe: Tito's Yugoslavia, the Slovene minority in Austria, and the Cominform*

Turning to Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav territorial demands on Austria in Carinthia and Styria an interpretation of the KPÖ's policies becomes even more complicated. After World War II, the Austrian communists praised the developments in Yugoslavia and highlighted the country's own contribution to its liberation from fascism. Already in April 1946, Yugoslavia was called the «freest, most democratic and progressed state of the non-Soviet world»<sup>33</sup>.

After Yugoslavia – in the course of the opening negotiations on the Austrian State Treaty at the turn of the year 1946 – announced its territorial claims against Austria in early 1947<sup>34</sup>, the KPÖ rejected them. Still being in governmental responsibility, they again (re)acted in Austria's national interest. However, they heavily criticized the other Austrian parties who had failed in establishing friendly relations to Yugoslavia. In their publicized interpretation, hostile Austrian politics had caused territorial demands<sup>35</sup>. At the same time, the KPÖ demanded a genuine autonomy for the Slovene Carinthians who disproportionately had contributed to Austrian resistance against fascism. With the same breath, the party heavily criticized the suppression of the minority by the regional and federal authorities regarding them as «agents» of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. In communist interpretation Austria's – of course questionable – minority policy and the problems of implementing minority rights in Carinthia, especially in public education, was a prolongation of the «German national and fascist policy» of deportation and annihilation. The so-called «agitation» and «witch-hunt» against Yugoslavia and the treatment of Austria's Slavic minorities were only two sides of the same medal. The KPÖ tried to justify its «dialectic» position by highlighting that on the one hand it opposed the Yugoslav territorial demands, but on the other hand opposed Austria's minority policy and position towards Yugoslavia<sup>36</sup>. This position did not change until mid-1948. On the contrary, the KPÖ continued to praise the developments in Socialist Yugoslavia<sup>37</sup>. In February 1948, the theoretical journal of the KPÖ «Weg und Ziel» reported about the solution of the national question in Yugoslavia. According to that article, Belgrade «had won the absolute confidence of its neighbors. Yugoslavia has become the spearhead of solid friendship of all freed people on the Balkans». Further «Weg und Ziel» argued that the solution of the national problem was the

<sup>33</sup> O[tto] L[angbein], *Die Kommunistische Partei Jugoslawiens*, in «Weg und Ziel», 4 (1946), 4 (April), pp. 221-25, 221.

<sup>34</sup> G. Stourzh, *Um Einheit und Freiheit. Staatsvertrag, Neutralität und das Ende der Ost-West-Besetzung Österreichs 1945-1955*, Böhlau, Wien 2005, pp. 63-67; S. Karner, P. Ruggenthaler, *Stalin, Tito und die Österreichfrage. Zur Österreichpolitik des Kreml im Kontext der sowjetischen Jugoslawienpolitik 1945 bis 1949*, in «Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung» (2008), pp. 81-105.

<sup>35</sup> «Volksstimme», 17 January 1947.

<sup>36</sup> O. Langbein, *Zur Kärntner Slowenenfrage*, in «Weg und Ziel», 5 (1947), 6 (June), pp. 402-16.

<sup>37</sup> *Die Volksfront Jugoslawiens*, in «Weg und Ziel», 5 (1946), 10 (October), pp. 802-08; F. Glaubauf, *Für einen dauerhaften Frieden, für eine Volksdemokratie!*, in «Weg und Ziel», 5 (1946), 12 (December), pp. 873-78



most important attribute of a genuine democracy, a higher form of democratization that after its successful implementation in the Soviet Union was now being realized in federative Yugoslavia<sup>38</sup>. Even though the March letter of the CPSU to Belgrade must have constituted a warning<sup>39</sup>, contacts, relations and exchange between the Austrian and Yugoslavian communists continued in the usual manner<sup>40</sup>. In May 1948, the later reform communist Franz Marek<sup>41</sup> wrote an article that aimed at explaining the concept of a single political party, a ticket of coalition of several parties, and the concept of «people's democracies» to the Austrian public. Using the example of Yugoslavia, he argued that the serried ranks of the Yugoslav «popular front» were a result of the joint fight against the fascist occupation led by the communists. Because of the strongest intensity of this fight among all other countries – Marek argued further – «the Yugoslav Peoples' Democracy is far ahead of other countries»<sup>42</sup>. Still in June 1948, «Weg und Ziel» once again decried the «agitation» against the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia as the Austrian governments' contribution to delaying the conclusion of a State Treaty. Despite rejecting Belgrade's territorial demands, the communists openly showed understanding for its lack of confidence in Austrian politicians and political parties. Thereby they insinuated that the whole question could easily be solved by establishing close relations between Austria and Yugoslavia as well as granting sufficient minority rights to the Slovenes of Carinthia. The whole article intended to provide the party members with «dialectic» arguments on how the KPÖ can on the one hand reject the territorial demands and on the other hand make the case for close relations to Yugoslavia. The clue lies in the subordination of the «national question» to the general «class struggle» and therefore the Austrian communist's struggle for a «People's Democracy»<sup>43</sup>.

Against this background, the Cominform resolutions and the split of Stalin with Tito must have constituted an unexpected blow to the KPÖ. The Austrian Communists were not informed in advance about the Cominform meeting on Yugoslavia<sup>44</sup>. As far as we now know, Austrian and Yugoslav communists despite the territorial demands had established close ties. Until June 1948, the KPÖ – with some success – engaged in the repatriation of Austrian Prisoners of War (POWs) in Yugoslavia<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> B. Zicherl, *Der Sieg der wahren Demokratie*, in «Weg und Ziel», 6 (1948), 2 (February), pp. 140-43.

<sup>39</sup> Translation of the letter by the CC of the CPSU, 27 March 1948, was on hand of Ernst Fischer, ZPA, *Auslandskorrespondenz* 1948.

<sup>40</sup> Letter by the CC of the CPY, 21 April 1948; CC of the KPÖ to CC CPY, 23 April 1948 ZPA, *Auslandskorrespondenz* 1948.

<sup>41</sup> On Marek, see M. Graf, *Franz Marek. Stalinist, Kritiker, Reformier, Ausgeschlossener*, in *Westeuropäische Kommunisten als Kritiker des Sowjetkommunismus*, a c. di M. Kessler, A. Schildt, forthcoming Berlin 2017; M. Graf, S. Knoll (eds.), *Franz Marek. Lebenserinnerungen und Schlüsseltexte*, Mandelbaum, Wien 2017.

<sup>42</sup> F. Marek, *Einheitslisten, Einheitsparteien und Volksdemokratie*, in «Weg und Ziel», 6 (1948), 5 (May), pp. 337-49, here p. 343.

<sup>43</sup> *Einige theoretische Bemerkungen zur Frage der Kärntner Slowenen*, in «Weg und Ziel», 6 (1948), 6 (June), pp. 459-64.

<sup>44</sup> Copies of the Cominform-letters to the CPY, in ZPA, *Auslandskorrespondenz* 1948.

<sup>45</sup> See correspondence with the Yugoslavian legation in Vienna, ZPA, *Auslandskorrespondenz* 1947-48.

Additionally the transfer of Austrian resistance fighters who had died in Yugoslavia was organized. In this regard, even a high-ranking party delegation was sent to Belgrade<sup>46</sup>. Apart from this «help» for the KPÖ, party leaders exchanged on their policies. The party leaders met in September 1947. Before the KPÖ tried to convince the CPSU that Soviet occupied Eastern Austria should become a «People's Democracy» they had discussed this idea with their Yugoslav comrades<sup>47</sup>. Moscow rejected the Austrian communists' request in February 1948<sup>48</sup>, and later that year in the course of the June-Cominform meeting, the CPSU even accused Belgrade of having sponsored this «hazardous» idea<sup>49</sup>. It was one of the accusations that was not publicized by the Cominform. Paralyzed from shock the KPÖ in the summer volume of «Weg und Ziel» issued only the Cominform resolution without commenting on it<sup>50</sup>. The party's daily «Volksstimme» unhasty reported about it alongside the Soviet provisions<sup>51</sup>.

The Stalin-Tito split dazed not only ordinary party members, the same holds true for many functionaries. However, their dilemma was that even though they hardly believed the accusations against Tito, even more they were not able to think that «infallible» Stalin was wrong. One of those Austrian communists of two minds was Franz Marek, who as chief editor of «Weg und Ziel» had the ungrateful task to justify the whole situation in a special volume of the theoretical journal. He fulfilled this task by sticking to the arguments of the critics by the Cominform accusing the Yugoslav leadership of having left the path of «internationalism» and drifting towards «nationalism». Now he openly stated that the Austrian communists had experienced this Yugoslav position on the example of the territorial demands. The Osvobodilna Fronta (OF) in Carinthia that had also rebuffed the Cominform critic was heavily criticized for its course. The hardest part in writing this article was definitely the attempt to explain why the critique was made public and in how far this change could be understood in the light of the hitherto extremely positive communist news coverage on Yugoslavia. Despite all efforts, this constituted an almost insurmountable task. However, Marek's article did not include terms like

<sup>46</sup> Fűrberg to CC of the CPY, 5 July 1947, ZPA, *Auslandskorrespondenz* 1947.

<sup>47</sup> W. Mueller, *Soviet Policy, Political Parties, and the Preparation for Communist Takeovers in Hungary, Germany, Austria, 1944-1946*, in «*East European Politics and Societies*», n. 24, 2010, pp. 90-115; S. Karner, P. Ruggenthaler, *Stalin, Tito und die Österreicherfrage. Zur Österreicherpolitik des Kreml im Kontext der sowjetischen Jugoslawienpolitik 1945 bis 1949*, cit., pp. 98-99.

<sup>48</sup> W. Mueller, *Die Teilung Österreichs als politische Option für KPÖ und UdSSR 1948*, in «*Zeitgeschichte*», n. 32 (2005) 1, pp. 47-54.

<sup>49</sup> *The Cominform. Minutes of the Three Conferences 1947/1948/1949*, a c. di G. Procacci et al., Feltrinelli, Milano 1994.

<sup>50</sup> *Kritik an den Führern der jugoslawischen Kommunisten*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», n. 6, 1948, 7 (July-August), 517-522; *Resolution des Informationsbüros der acht Kommunisten Parteien über die Lage der Kommunistischen Partei Jugoslawiens*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», n. 6, 1948, 7 (July-August), 562-568.

<sup>51</sup> For a sample of cuttings, see AÖGZ, *Nachlass* 40 (Josef Lauscher), DO 173, *Mappe* 6. For the Yugoslavian perception, see Arhiv Jugoslavije, Fond CK SKJ IX, 6/I-43 15-1/41.

«fascists» or «agents of imperialism» when referring to the Yugoslav leadership<sup>52</sup>. This constituted a remarkable difference to other functionaries of the KPÖ who in the years to come discredited the Yugoslav leadership as «fascists», «imperialistic agents» and «traitors»<sup>53</sup>.

After the fatal results of the October 1949 national elections, when the KPÖ fell to 5.1% of the overall votes there was disunity about the reasons for the results. The East German state party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED) noted that the KPÖ considered its work in the federal provinces as too weak and highlighted that in Carinthia the «Yugoslavian question» had played a special role. Now they claimed it to be a «mistake», that they had started «too late with the campaign against Tito». Additionally the Austrian communists had not included the Eastern European show trials into their electoral campaign<sup>54</sup>. However, the campaign against Tito was reinforced after the show trials in Bulgaria and Hungary. The scripted confessions and judgments were presented as the ultimate proof of Yugoslav guilt<sup>55</sup>. The OF was constantly criticized for propagating the politics of the «Tito-clique» in Austria and aiming at the decomposition of the Austrian workers<sup>56</sup>. Marek claimed that only a few «sincere» workers had not fallen into the post-Cominform hysteria<sup>57</sup>. From a party meeting in Vienna it is reported that among the party's rank and file there was a lack of understanding with regard to the accusations against Tito and especially why they were articulated only then and not already in 1946<sup>58</sup>. The multiple contradictions overstrained them and the party leadership was criticized for having praised Tito's Yugoslavia until the Cominform resolutions<sup>59</sup>. In a regional perspective, the backdrop of the Stalin-Tito-split was even more severe and lasting with the

<sup>52</sup> Further, he complained about the Yugoslav communists calling their Austrian «comrades» «agents of imperialism» because of their rejection of the territorial demands. F. Marek, *Was lehrt uns die Kritik an den Führern der KP Jugoslawiens?*, in «Weg und Ziel», 6 (1948), Sonderheft (August), pp. 569-96; also see *idem*, *Fragen der Volksdemokratie - in der Kritik und Selbstkritik der Kommunistischen Parteien*, in «Weg und Ziel», n. 6, 1948, 10 (October), pp. 704-15.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. F. West, *Die Spione von Belgrad*, in «Weg und Ziel», n. 7, 1949, 10-11 (November), pp. 678-707.

<sup>54</sup> *Betrifft: Wahlen in Österreich. Zur Information an Pieck, Grotewohl, Ulbricht und Ackermann*, 1. November 1949, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/20/263, Bl. 105-106; also, see NY 4182/1286 (*Nachlass* Walter Ulbricht), Bl. 1-2.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. E. Priester, *Der Kostoff-Prozeß*, in «Weg und Ziel», n. 8 1950, 2 (February), pp. 123-27; F. West, *Die Rolle der Tito-Faschisten*, in «Weg und Ziel», n. 8, 1950, 2 (June), pp. 422-33. On the KPÖ and the «show trials» in general, see F. Keller, *Die KPÖ und die Schauprozesse in Osteuropa 1948 bis 1953*, in *Ich habe den Tod verdient. Schauprozesse und politische Verfolgung in Mittel- und Osteuropa 1945-1956*, a. c. di W. Maderthaner et al, Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, Wien 1991, pp. 199-218.

<sup>56</sup> *Die Tito-Clique an der Spitze der OF wird mit ihren Machenschaften in Österreich noch größeren Schiffbruch erleiden als ihre Spießgesellen in Triest* See *Fragen der Volksdemokratie - in der Kritik und Selbstkritik der Kommunistischen Parteien*, in «Weg und Ziel», 7 (1949), 7-8 (July-August), pp. 575-76.

<sup>57</sup> F. Marek, *Erinnerungen*, *Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes* (DÖW), *Bibliothek (Exil)*, Nr. 09475, fol. 77.

<sup>58</sup> Untitled reports on district meetings, AÖGZ, *Nachlass* 40 (Josef Lauscher), DO 173, fol. 591; fol. 592 on the discussions in the Burgenland province.

<sup>59</sup> *Bericht über das Seminar im XXII. Bezirk, zum Thema «Die Rolle der Tito-Clique und der Rajk-Prozeß»*, AÖGZ, *Nachlass* 40 (Josef Lauscher), DO 173, Inv.-Nr. 365, XXXVI, fol. 593-594.

party branches in Carinthia and Styria most affected. The Party leadership blamed the «weakness» of the regional work in the fields of party media and missing language skills among the cadres. The existing problems had to be overcome by tracing the «Titoists and Trotskyists», but no plan for concrete measures existed<sup>60</sup>. The KPÖ accused the «Tito clique» of the OF to abuse the national consciousness of the Slovenes in Carinthia<sup>61</sup>. Consequently, the Austrian party called for «watchfulness» of its members against the «propaganda» of the «Tito-bandits»<sup>62</sup>. This also included the more general call for an internal «purge» of the party<sup>63</sup>, which constituted one of the aspects highlighted before and on the XV party congress in 1951<sup>64</sup>.

There is some evidence that the leading intellectual of the KPÖ Ernst Fischer in his first reaction thought about siding with Tito<sup>65</sup>. However, as a Stalinist, he stuck with the party line and maybe in compensating his original position he set a peak to the condemnation of Tito. Fischer wrote an exemplary Stalinist propaganda play<sup>66</sup> whose only aim was denouncing the Yugoslav leader as a «traitor». It was to be performed first in Vienna and soon after in the GDR in the *Deutsches Theater* in East Berlin on 18 July 1950 in view of the cheering SED-elite. Ironically, less than twenty years later, the same East German elite stigmatized Fischer himself in the same way<sup>67</sup>. It was the same period of time, when Fischer himself named writing this play «worse, than a mistake»<sup>68</sup>. In the official diction of the KPÖ by 1951, Yu-

<sup>60</sup> *Bericht der SČSK für Österreich an das ZK der VKP(B), A.A. Smirnov, über Vorbereitung und Durchführung des November-Plenums des ZK der KPÖ 8. Dezember 1949* (= Document 62), in *Sowjetische Politik in Österreich 1945-1955: Dokumente aus russischen Archiven*, a. c. di W. Mueller et al, ÖAW, Wien 2005, pp. 629-37, here pp. 631-32.

<sup>61</sup> H. Mitteräcker, *Die Tito-Clique in Kärnten*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», n. 8, 1950, 7-8 (July-August), pp. 512-16.

<sup>62</sup> F. West, *Wachsamkeit – Verpflichtung eines jeden Kommunisten*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», n. 9, 1951, 3 (April), pp. 252-58.

<sup>63</sup> *Politische und moralische Klarheit schützt die Partei vor Agenten und Feinden*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», n. 9, 1951, 7-8 (July-August), pp. 539-46.

<sup>64</sup> F. Fürnberg, *Vom 14. zum 15. Parteitag*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», n. 9, 1951, 9 (September), pp. 569-80, here p. 580; *Thesen des Zentralkomitees zum 15. Parteitag*, AÖGZ, *Nachlass 40* (Josef Lauscher), DO 138, *Mappe 5*, I-fol. 187-190; J. Kopenig, *Bericht des Zentralkomitees; die politische Lage und die Aufgaben der Partei*. XV. Parteitag, November 1951, AÖGZ, *Nachlass 40* (Josef Lauscher), DO 138, *Mappe 5*, I-fol. 234-253, here fol. 236-237.

<sup>65</sup> «Many reports tend to confirm development of serious split in ranks of Austrian Communist Party as result of Cominform action against Tito. President Kopenig and General Secretary Fuernberg of Austrian Communist Party reportedly support Cominform while Communist nationalist Fischer defends Tito. Fischer accused of defection from soviet orbit many times in past and such schism may well be final contribution on Fischer's fall from power if break not healed soon. All efforts being made by Communists to keep these disputes from public. Osvobodilna Fronta, Carinthia branch of Austrian Communist Party which favors return [sic!] of South Carinthia to Yugoslavia, made formal break with Cominform supporters because of their current support of Tito. Fuernberg has been sent to Carinthia to attempt to strengthen pro-Cominform elements there». Telegram (Weeka Austria) to Secretary of State, Vienna, 6 August 1948, National Archives, Washington DC, Record Group (RG) 59, Central Decimal Files 1945-49, box 6852.

<sup>66</sup> E. Fischer, *Der große Verrat. Ein politisches Drama in fünf Akten*, Globus, Wien 1950.

<sup>67</sup> S. Wolle, *Der große Plan. Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR (1949-1961)*, Ch. Links, Berlin 2013, pp. 86-92.

<sup>68</sup> E. Fischer, *Das Ende einer Illusion. Erinnerungen 1945-1955*, Verlag Fritz Molden, Wien 1973, p. 271.

goslavia had become a «capitalist» country<sup>69</sup>. In early 1952, the KPÖ propaganda against Tito even spoke of Yugoslavian «war-plans» against Austria<sup>70</sup>.

Before 1948 the Austrian communists had blamed the Austrian government for not establishing close relations with Tito-Yugoslavia, when Austrian–Yugoslavian relations slowly normalized by the beginning of the 1950s<sup>71</sup> they publicly criticized this reconciliation. KPÖ media spoke of US-puppets in Vienna and Belgrade, actively contributing in Washington's military strategy<sup>72</sup>. Tito's warm words about Austria's independence were regarded as «hypocrisy». Austrian politicians were denounced as «comrades» of the «Tito fascists». Unsurprisingly, the KPÖ refrained from reporting about refugees from Yugoslavia in the 1940s, now they claimed it to be proof for the growing resistance of «workers, peasants and soldiers» against the Yugoslavian «capitalist regime»<sup>73</sup>. Whilst elections in the «people's democracies» were constantly praised as exemplary democratic, the same type of elections in Yugoslavia was heavily criticized<sup>74</sup>. Instead of welcoming or at least accepting the rapprochement between Belgrade and Vienna, the KPÖ celebrated the fifth anniversary of the Cominform and highlighted the importance of its resolutions on Tito's Yugoslavia<sup>75</sup>. It was strictly forbidden to all party members to visit Yugoslavia or even to maintain contacts with «comrades» or relatives living in the Southern neighbor state. Any violation of these restrictions was likely to lead to an expulsion from the party<sup>76</sup>. Ironically, these restrictions apparently did not apply to the KPÖ's financial apparatus. Its companies were for example involved in establishing trade relations between Yugoslavia and the GDR in the 1950s<sup>77</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> L. Spira, *Das kapitalistische Jugoslawien*, in «Weg und Ziel», 9 (1951), 3 (March), pp. 171-83.

<sup>70</sup> H. Kalt, *Tito und die Kriegspläne gegen Österreich*, in «Weg und Ziel», n. 10, 1952, 1 (January), pp. 47-52.

<sup>71</sup> A. Suppan, *Jugoslawien und der österreichische Staatsvertrag*, in *Der österreichische Staatsvertrag 1955. Internationale Strategie, rechtliche Relevanz, nationale Identität. The Austrian State Treaty. International Strategy, Legal Relevance, National Identity*, a c. di A. Suppan et al, ÖAW, Wien 2005, pp. 431-47; P. Dragišić, *Österreichisch-jugoslawische Beziehungen 1945-1955*, Dissertation University of Vienna 2007; *idem*, *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Austrije 1945-1955*, Beograd 2013.

<sup>72</sup> «Volksstimme», 18. June 1952.

<sup>73</sup> L. Spira, *Die Titofaschisten - Bundesgenossen der Figl-Schärf-Regierung*, in «Weg und Ziel», n. 10, 1952, 9 (September), pp. 588-96. On the Yugoslavian refugees in Austria in the 1950s, see E. Engelke, «Jeder Flüchtling ist eine Schwächung der Volksdemokratie». *Die illegalen Überschreitungen am jugoslawisch-steirischen Grenzabschnitt in den Fünfzigerjahren*, Lit, Wien 2011.

<sup>74</sup> *Fünf Jahre Informationsbüro der Kommunistischen und Arbeiterparteien*, in «Weg und Ziel», n. 10, 1952, 9 (September), pp. 586-87.

<sup>75</sup> *Tito-Jugoslawien*, in «Weg und Ziel», n. 12, 1954, 1 (January), pp. 69-71.

<sup>76</sup> J. Meisel, *Die Mauer im Kopf. Erinnerungen eines ausgeschlossenen Kommunisten 1945-1970*, in «Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik», Wien 1986, p. 110.

<sup>77</sup> See the documents in BArch, Berlin, Abteilung DDR, DL 202/128. Cf. M. Graf, *Parteifinanzierung oder Devisenerwirtschaftung? Zu den Wirtschaftsbeziehungen von KPÖ und SED, 1946-1989*, in «Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung», 2014, pp. 229-47. Economic relations of the economic apparatus of the KPÖ to Yugoslavia had been established at least in 1947. Secretariat CC of the KPÖ to CC of the CPY, Vienna, 31 May 1947, ZPA, Auslandskorrespondenz 1947.

After Stalin's death in 1953, polemics against Tito decreased. The Soviet–Yugoslav rapprochement in 1955 was called a «normalization» and valued as a «great help» for Belgrade<sup>78</sup>. The KPÖ preserved the memories on the negative experiences with Tito's policy towards Styria and Carinthia. Internally the recent shift of Moscow's dealing with Yugoslavia caused bewilderment. Most crucial was «the fact that the Yugoslavian communists had re-established a friendly relationship with the Communist world movement and that everything has to be undertaken to foster this development»<sup>79</sup>. Hence, after some «thaw» in 1956, when the Yugoslavian side had remained reluctant<sup>80</sup>, relations between the Austrian and Yugoslavian communists normalized in 1957<sup>81</sup>. This, however, did not reflect the attitude of the KPÖ's rank and file. At the plenum of the CPSU central committee in June 1957 at which Nikita S. Khrushchev had consolidated his power and safeguarded his course against opponents like meanwhile openly criticized Vyacheslav M. Molotov. In various meetings of local party organizations held to discuss the recent developments in the Soviet Union it became obvious that many ordinary party members had kept their propaganda inflicted «distrust against Tito». One even claimed: «Tito is and remains a bounder»<sup>82</sup>. Against the revelations of the year 1956, some other «comrades» questioned whether the KPÖ's critique on the «Yugoslavian Communists in 1948 was wrong?»<sup>83</sup>. After another such gathering, Josef Lauscher, one of the leading Viennese functionaries of the KPÖ summarized: «The relation to Yugoslavia and the role of Tito deeply troubled the comrades. Opinions differ»<sup>84</sup>.

### *The Question of Trieste and the Austrian State Treaty*

Not surprisingly, the position of the KPÖ towards the question of Trieste has to be regarded within the context of Soviet–Yugoslavian relations. However there is also another dimension: The question of Trieste had some repercussions on the Austrian State Treaty<sup>85</sup> and the Soviet foreign policy zigzags that finally even managed

<sup>78</sup> *Über Jugoslawien*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», n. 14, 1956, 11 (November), pp. 830-32.

<sup>79</sup> *Material über Jugoslawien*, July 1956, AÖGZ, *Nachlass* 40 (Josef Lauscher), DO 173, *Mappe* 6, fol. 639-645.

<sup>80</sup> This was due to the «Stalinist» positioning of the KPÖ leadership and the recent events in Hungary. Additionally, the further development of bilateral relations to official Austria was prioritized over interparty relations. *Zabeleška povodom predloga da dolazu u Jugoslaviju nesvanična delegacija KP Austrije*, 12 December 1956, Arhiv Jugoslavije, Fond CK SKJ IX, 6/I-143.

<sup>81</sup> *Informacija*, Belgrade, 23 September 1957, Arhiv Jugoslavije, Fond CK SKJ IX, 6/I-143.

<sup>82</sup> *Funktionär-Konferenz über das Juni-Plenum der KPdSU im XV. Bezirk*, Report by Josef Lauscher, 12 July 1957, AÖGZ, *Nachlass* 40 (Josef Lauscher), DO 168, fol. 1037.

<sup>83</sup> *Funktionär-Konferenz über das Juni-Plenum der KPdSU im IX. Bezirk*, Report by Josef Lauscher, 15 July 1957, AÖGZ, *Nachlass* 40 (Josef Lauscher), DO 168, fol. 1048.

<sup>84</sup> *Funktionär-Konferenz über das Juni-Plenum der KPdSU bei der PO-Polizei*, Report by Josef Lauscher, 16 July 1957, AÖGZ, *Nachlass* 40 (Josef Lauscher), DO 168, fol. 1062.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. M. Graf, *Österreich und Triest 1945-1955. Eine vergessene histoire croisée des frühen Kalten Krieges*, in «*Römische Historische Mitteilungen*» 58 (2016), pp. 389-430, here pp. 407-29.

to make the Austrian State Treaty (and Austria becoming neutral) another defeat for the Austrian communists. In the early postwar period, not least due to Belgrade's instigation, the KPÖ took a pro-Yugoslavian stance<sup>86</sup>. In 1945–46, when Togliatti still publicly spoke of the workers' desire to become part of Yugoslavia, the KPÖ propagated that Trieste had to become a Yugoslav city, that would be granted a special autonomy within federal Yugoslavia<sup>87</sup>. This position was justified with Trieste's importance for the Central European economy<sup>88</sup> and news coverage on demonstrations expressing the «workers desire» to join Yugoslavia<sup>89</sup>. The Internationalization of Trieste in the Italian Peace Treaty was called a «compromise», but «no solution». Austrian communist media stated, «from an Austrian point of view the best solution would be a Yugoslav Trieste». In their interpretation, such a solution would make Trieste the port of Central Europe. Therefore, they called the Austrian government to issue a declaration supportive of the Yugoslav position<sup>90</sup>. Hence, it was not surprising that the KPÖ right from the start sarcastically rejected all early postwar Austrian discussions about a highly improbable «return» of Trieste to Austria<sup>91</sup>.

Dealing with Trieste, after the Stalin-Tito split the KPÖ supported the Soviet and Triestine positions in this question. Now Tito was accused of demanding a US-base in Trieste<sup>92</sup>. The purge of the Triestine communist party of «Tito-agents» was welcomed by the KPÖ<sup>93</sup>. Especially in the 1950s, party media regularly published articles by Vittorio Vidali<sup>94</sup> and often reported on the «Anglo-American, imperialistic occupation regime, openly detested» by the Triestine population<sup>95</sup>. The US-Yugoslav reconciliation after 1948 was regarded as a defeat of Italian Prime minister Alcide de Gasperi running opposite the promises the Western Allies had made in favor of its Italian Ally<sup>96</sup>.

The KPÖ and the Triestine communists established close contacts. In case of the Triestine communists, visa for Eastern Europe were issued at the respective diplomatic representations of the «people's republics» in Vienna<sup>97</sup>. When travelling through Austria, naturally meetings with the KPÖ took place. Unfortunately, we do not know a lot about their conversations. Documentation shows that there was

<sup>86</sup> *Materijal o KP Austrije*, 15 July 1945, Arhiv Jugoslavije, Fond CK SKJ IX-6/I-5-15-I/4.

<sup>87</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 19 September 1945, p. 1; «*Volksstimme*», 23 September 1945, p. 1; «*Volksstimme*», 1 January 1946, p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 21 March 1946, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 27 March 1946, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 2 July 1946; «*Volksstimme*», 4 July 1946.

<sup>91</sup> T[ibor] B[arta], *Triest*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», n. 4, 1946, 4 (April), pp. 232-38. Cf. M. Graf, *Österreich und Triest 1945-1955. Eine vergessene histoire croisée des frühen Kalten Krieges*, cit., pp. 392-98.

<sup>92</sup> F. West, *Die Rolle der Tito-Faschisten*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», n. 8, 1950, 2 (June), pp. 422-33, here pp. 426-27.

<sup>93</sup> L. Spira, *Triest und der österreichische Staatsvertrag*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», n. 8, 1950, 7-8 (July-August), pp. 566-70.

<sup>94</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 19 September 1953, pp. 1-2; «*Volksstimme*», 10 October 1954, p. 4; «*Volksstimme*», 28 October 1953, p. 4.

<sup>95</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 25 March 1952, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> «*Volksstimme*», 10 May 1952, p. 2; «*Volksstimme*», 18 March 1952, p. 11; «*Volksstimme*», 1 June 1952, p. 6.

<sup>97</sup> For example, see Letter by Vidali, 12 January 1951, ZPA, *Auslandskorrespondenz* 1951; Vidali to CC of the KPÖ, 15 March 1951; various letters in ZPA, *Auslandskorrespondenz* 1953.

a vivid exchange of publications on Trieste and Carinthia<sup>98</sup>. All these exchanges aimed at supporting the «Anti-Titoist» position in Trieste and Austria. Due to the electoral campaign in Austria, the KPÖ was unable to attend the Triestine party congress in 1949, but they assured their «comrades» with a message of solidarity<sup>99</sup>. The Communist Slovene Carinthians joined this stance<sup>100</sup>. In later years, the Austrian communists tried to support the so-called «peace movement» of Trieste<sup>101</sup>. At the party congress in 1953 Vidali complained about the weakness of the peace movement. Nevertheless, the KPÖ delegates had the impression that the Triestine communists were a «people's party» indeed. Its popularity was based on the «traditions of the partisan movement» and they did not have to face a strong Socialist party (like the KPÖ had to)<sup>102</sup>. When the constant crisis aggravated in 1952-53, they considered the partition of Trieste as a breach of the Italian Peace Treaty delivering Zone B to the «Tito-fascists». Additionally they named and shamed Trieste as remaining a military base of NATO. This interpretation had close connection to the postponed conclusion of the Austrian State treaty.

When the Soviet Union in spring 1950 packaged the conclusion of an Austrian State Treaty with a solution of the question of Trieste that was acceptable to Moscow<sup>103</sup> they followed the Kremlin's directives. In short: As long as there was no guarantee that Austria would not become a second Trieste, there would be no State Treaty. In Soviet propagandistic interpretation, Trieste had become a NATO basis and there was no guarantee that Austria would not become a similar case. The Austrian governments' interpretation whereupon the Austrian treaty had nothing to do with Trieste was called «mendacity» or «hypocrisy». The Austrian communists' party media joined the Soviet chorus by stating: «Austria must not become a second Trieste»<sup>104</sup>. As far as we can judge nowadays, the packaging of Trieste with the Austrian treaty was nothing more than a mean for delaying the conclusion of the Austrian treaty. Contemporaneously the KPÖ accepted the Soviet position. They reported about Trieste as a striking example for the US-policy of creating military bases all over the world and violating international treaties they signed only recently<sup>105</sup>. Ernst Fischer even justified it in his memoirs after he had already entirely broken with the

<sup>98</sup> See correspondence in ZPA, *Auslandskorrespondenz* 1949.

<sup>99</sup> Letter by Vidali, Trieste, 5 August 1949, ZPA, *Auslandskorrespondenz* 1949; Kopenlig to PCTLT, 31 August 1949, ZPA, *Auslandskorrespondenz* 1949.

<sup>100</sup> *Die slowenischen Kommunisten Kärntens an das Verteidigungskomitee der fortschrittlichen slovenischen Kultur*, 6 October 1949, ZPA, *Auslandskorrespondenz* 1949.

<sup>101</sup> Letter by Angelo Franza (Comitato Triestino della Pace), Trieste, 14 February 1951, forwarded by the CC of the KPÖ to Carinthia, ZPA, *Auslandskorrespondenz* 1951.

<sup>102</sup> Report on the party congress in Trieste [1953], W. Scholz, ZPA, *Auslandskorrespondenz* 1953.

<sup>103</sup> G. Stourzh, *Um Einheit und Freiheit*, cit., pp. 178-79.

<sup>104</sup> In communist interpretation this meant, that the United States and Great Britain were rather denying Austria its State Treaty than retreating from Trieste. Cf. L. Spira *Triest und der österreichische Staatsvertrag*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», n. 8, 1950, 7-8 (July-August), pp. 566-70.

<sup>105</sup> *Die Drohung der amerikanischen Kriegsstützpunkte*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», n. 12, 1954, 4 (April), pp. 331-33, here p. 332.



Soviet Union and became a fierce critic of Soviet politics as well as a reform communist<sup>106</sup>. Another important reformer Franz Marek wrote in his unpublished memoirs of the «unintelligible reference to Trieste»<sup>107</sup>. Marek also heavily criticized the Soviet zigzags on the way to the Austrian State Treaty. The most striking example is the question of neutrality: The KPÖ for many years had demanded a neutral status for Austria<sup>108</sup>. After the party leadership returned from a visit to Moscow in 1954, they abandoned this demand. Hence, the KPÖ one again was taken by surprise, when the Austrian government in April 1955 brought home the State Treaty<sup>109</sup>, for which it – among other things – had «paid the prize» of neutrality<sup>110</sup>. The State Treaty and the end of Soviet occupation constituted another setback for the Austrian communists. After Khrushchev's secret speech at the twentieth party congress of the CPSU in March 1956 and the bloody crackdown on the Hungarian uprising of October-November 1956 the party lost about one-third of its membership<sup>111</sup>. Upon the next elections in 1959, the KPÖ lost its last members of parliament and marginalization on the domestic political level continued. However, in the 1960s some enlightened officials of the Austrian communists became «masterminds» of «Eurocommunist» ideas<sup>112</sup>. As a financial (trans)actor between East and West the KPÖ managed to survive until the end of the Cold War<sup>113</sup>. After a short period of reform communism, that can be regarded as a precursor of «Eurocommunism»<sup>114</sup>, the party

<sup>106</sup> E. Fischer, *Ende*, cit., pp. 366.

<sup>107</sup> F. Marek, *Erinnerungen, Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes (DÖW), Bibliothek (Exil)*, Nr. 09475, fol. 69.

<sup>108</sup> M. Mugrauer, *Die Politik der KPÖ 1945 bis 1955/56*, cit., p. 46.

<sup>109</sup> F. Marek, *Erinnerungen, Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes (DÖW), Bibliothek (Exil)*, Nr. 09475, fol. 79-81; *Protokoll des Gespräches des Assistenten des Leiters der Abteilung für innenpolitische und wirtschaftliche Fragen des Apparates des Hochkommissars der UdSSR in Österreich, V.I. Ugrjumov, mit dem Leiter der Propaganda- und Politischulungsabteilung des ZK der KPÖ*, F. Marek, 28 September 1954, (= Document 91), in W. Mueller, *Sowjetische Politik in Österreich 1945-1955*, cit., pp. 957-59; F. Marek, *Die Berliner Konferenz*, in «Weg und Ziel», n. 12, 1954, Sonderheft März, pp. 253-76, here p. 276; *Der 16. Parteitag der KPÖ*, in «Weg und Ziel», n. 12, 1954, 6 (June), pp. 413-21.

<sup>110</sup> On the Austrian State Treaty, see G. Stourzh, *Um Einheit und Freiheit*, cit.; A. Suppan et al, *Der Österreichische Staatsvertrag*, cit.

<sup>111</sup> M. Mugrauer, *Zwischen Erschütterung, neuer Offenheit und «Normalisierung»: Die KPÖ, der 20. Parteitag der KPdSU und die Ungarn-Krise 1956*, in *Osteuropa vom Weltkrieg zur Wende*, a c. di W. Mueller, M. Portmann, cit., pp. 257-97.

<sup>112</sup> M. Graf, *Frühstart des «Eurokommunismus»? Das Experiment der KPÖ und die Konferenzen westeuropäischer KPs im Kontext der europäischen Reformkommunismen der Sechzigerjahre*, in «Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung», forthcoming 2017.

<sup>113</sup> M. Graf, *Parteifinanzierung oder Devisenerwirtschaftung? Zu den Wirtschaftsbeziehungen von KPÖ und SED, 1946-1989*, in «Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung», 2014, pp. 229-47; M. Seliger, *KPÖ-Firmen und Osthandel 1945-1989. Rahmenbedingungen und einige Aspekte der Außenhandelspraxis*, in «Zarte Bande». *Österreich und die europäischen planwirtschaftlichen Länder – «Delicate Relationships»*. *Austria and Europe's Planned Economies*, a c. di G. Enderle-Burcel et al, Studienverlag, Innsbruck 2006, pp. 107-29.

<sup>114</sup> M. Graf, *The Rise and Fall of «Austro-Eurocommunism». On the «Crisis» within the KPÖ and the Significance of East German Influence in the 1960s*, in «Journal of European Integration History», n. 20, 2014, 2, pp. 203-18; L. Spira, *Ein gescheiterter Versuch. Der Austro-Eurokommunismus*, Jugend und Volk, Wien 1979, pp. 49-51.

– due to internal reasons, resulting from the dominant position of its rank and files, and external pressure – returned to an entirely Muscovite stance. On the emergence of Mikhail Gorbachev's «glasnost» and «perestroika», they even increasingly sided with the dogmatic East German communists<sup>115</sup>.

### *Conclusions*

In the period discussed in this paper the KPÖ had been a classical Stalinist party that acted within Austria under quadripartite Allied control, against the international background of postwar conflicts and the early Cold War. Hence, it always had to maneuver between national interests and internationalism. Almost all aspects show this «dialectics». In the end, the Austrian communists played only a minor role in the «world movement» and in almost every case subordinated their interest to the line proposed by Moscow. The case of South Tyrol is proof for backing Austrian national interests, however, without abstaining from criticizing the other parties' politics. Additionally, all efforts to gain influence in South Tyrol failed, not only because of the lack of interest by the native population, but also due to the fact that the PCI met the Austrian communists' ambitions with a refusal. This only changed after both communist parties had left their national governments. Only in the 1950s, they internationally joined forces, however, without any striking success. When the South Tyrol problem by the second half of the 1950s reappeared on the international agenda and terrorism spread in the region, the stance of the KPÖ was that only a communist Italy would be good for the minority.

In case of the territorial disputes between Austria and Yugoslavia, the KPÖ had to face the dilemma of national interests and international solidarity. They tried to deal with this task by praising the developments of Yugoslavia, but at the same time rejecting Belgrade's territorial demands. Despite this positioning, relations between Austrian and Yugoslavian communists developed well, until the Cominform resolution entirely changed the situation from one day to another. Now internationalist and national interests coincided. The KPÖ joined the «excommunication» of Tito and in the end voluntarily participated in condemning him as a «traitor». Yet, at home, this caused difficulties for the Austrian party. Not only to ordinary party members, but also to some of its leading intellectuals it was hard to believe that Tito was that sort of «traitor». However, as Stalinists, they ultimately joined the Moscow-led Cominformist chorus.

<sup>115</sup> M. Graf, *Die KPÖ und Europa. Internationale Stellung und Europapolitik einer Kleinpartei (1945-heute)*, in *Kommunismus – Europa – Nation. Europapolitik und -vorstellungen der europäischen kommunistischen Parteien 1945-1989*, a c. di F. Di Palma, W. Mueller, Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn 2016, pp. 240-60; P. Wimmer, *Die Rezeption der Ideologie der Perestroika durch die KPÖ von 1985 bis 1990. Anhand «Weg und Ziel», der «Monatsschrift für Theorie und Praxis des Marxismus-Leninismus»*, Dissertation University of Vienna 2003.

Tito's shift to the West among other things resulted in an Austrian-Yugoslav rapprochement and soon the territorial claims lacked Soviet support and their importance in bilateral relations declined. The Austrian communists heavily opposed this development. Austrian and Yugoslav politicians were called «agents of imperialism» joining forces with the US military strategy. Relations between the Austrian and Yugoslavian communists normalized only after the Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement of 1955-56. Later in the 1960s, the KPÖ refused to join the seminal re-enforcement of critique on Yugoslavia<sup>116</sup>.

The KPÖ's position towards Trieste has to be seen within the context of the Stalin-Tito-split. No mutual claims and demands existed between Austria and Trieste. Right from the start in summer 1945, the KPÖ was supportive of the Yugoslav position. After 1948, it was exactly the opposite. The KPÖ established close (but not very intense) ties with the Triestine CP and sponsored propagandistic support. This position was closely linked with the Soviet packaging of the question of Trieste and the Austrian State Treaty in 1950. In blaming the US and British military presence in Trieste the KPÖ propagated: «Austria must not become a second Trieste». For the domestic political performance such a stance was everything else but helpful. The close alliance with the CPSU was incriminatory in many ways. In case of the territorial and minority conflicts of the «Alps-Adriatic» region a striking proof of that assumption is Austria becoming neutral. The end of the Soviet occupation and the concussions of the year 1956 ultimately ended the most «successful» period of the history of the KPÖ. Its close relation with and obedience to the Soviets had affected not only its domestic political performance, but also its internationalism. While the position of the Austrian communists in the South Tyrol question had hardly any relevance, this became obvious in case of Yugoslavia and Trieste.

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<sup>116</sup> E. Kodicek, *Jugoslawien heute*, in «*Weg und Ziel*», n. 12, 1954, 6 (June), pp. 407-12.

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Alla fine del secondo conflitto mondiale la Venezia Giulia si trovò al centro di complesse controversie internazionali che ebbero effetti drammatici sulle popolazioni locali. Il volume ricostruisce le strategie approntate dal governo italiano nel tentativo di mantenere aperti canali di comunicazione con i territori giuliani sottoposti a occupazione militare alleata e jugoslava, focalizzando l'attenzione sulla situazione istriana. In particolare si affrontano le modalità con cui le istituzioni centrali, attraverso l'Ufficio per le zone di confine, si relazionarono con gli enti locali giuliani allo scopo di convincere gli italiani rimasti nella Zona B del Territorio libero di Trieste a sostenere politiche attive di opposizione ai poteri popolari jugoslavi, coinvolgendoli in attività di propaganda e assistenza. Ad emergere nel ruolo di protagonisti soprattutto gli uomini legati al Comitato di liberazione nazionale dell'Istria, le cui vicende restituiscono le difficoltà, gli errori e i sogni che scandirono la «battaglia per l'italianità» della Venezia Giulia combattuta dalla politica italiana a ridosso del confine italo-sloveno nel secondo dopoguerra.