Otto Bauer (1881–1938) was a leader of the left wing of Austrian Social Democracy and one of the foremost thinkers of Austro-Marxism and of the centrist tendency within the Second International. The term ‘Austro-Marxism’ is used to describe a group of Viennese intellectuals belonging to the Austrian SDAP (Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei) that included, in addition to Bauer, Karl Renner, Max Adler, Friedrich Adler, and Rudolf Hilferding, Gustav Eckstein and Karl Kautsky, two socialist leaders active in Germany, and the historian of socialism Karl Grünberg, also had strong links with this tendency.¹

The son of a prosperous Viennese-Jewish textile-manufacturer, Otto Bauer earned a Ph.D. in Law at the University of Vienna and in 1907 published his major book, _The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy_. In that work, he defended ‘cultural-national autonomy’ rather than national self-determination (up to and including separation), as advocated by Russian Social Democracy. In 1907, Bauer also founded _Der Kampf_, the theoretical journal

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¹ Leon Trotsky, who lived in Vienna from October 1907 to August 1914, was strongly influenced by some aspects of Austro-Marxism, but he ultimately dismissed the school itself as ‘an erudite and stilted theory of passivity and capitulation’. See his assessment of Austro-Marxism in Trotsky 1920, Chapter 9: ‘Karl Kautsky, His School and His Book’, pp. 177–87.
of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party, and, from 1907 to 1914, he was party secretary. Captured on the Eastern Front in the early months of the World War I, he spent three years as a prisoner of war in Russia, returning to Austria in 1917.

Following Victor Adler’s death in 1918, Bauer became leader of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party. From November 1918 to July 1919, the Austrian Social Democrats formed a coalition government with the Christian-Social Party, with Otto Bauer serving as Minister of Foreign Affairs. When Engelbert Dollfuss, with the assistance of elements of the Christian-Social Party and the Heimwehr, installed an authoritarian corporatist dictatorship in 1933, Austrian Social Democracy was severely repressed. After the Social Democrats’ failed attempt at an uprising in February 1934, Otto Bauer was forced into exile. He continued to organise the resistance, first from Brno, Czechoslovakia, and later from Paris. He died in Paris on 4 July 1938, aged 56, just four months after Austria became part of Hitler’s Reich.

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‘On British Imperialism’


Mr. Schulze-Gauernitz has recently published a book on British imperialism, but the bulky volume contains little valuable material for those who want to write its history. However, it will not be completely useless to future historians, because it shows the cultural currents prevalent among the German bourgeoisie at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The ruling ideas of each age have always been the ideas of its ruling class. But, in the great transitional epochs of history, the class-ideology of the ruling class is often defeated by the world of ideas belonging to the revolutionary class that it rules, even before the rising class conquers political power. Thus, the political victory of the bourgeoisie was preceded by the

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2. Bauer 1907.