

# Internationalism made in Austria

Fritz Keller. *Gelebter Internationalismus. Österreichs Linke und der algerische Widerstand (1958 - 1963)*. Vienna: Promedia, 2010. 320 pp. Paper, ISBN 978-3-85371-321-1, € 19,90.

In his new book, Austrian historian Fritz Keller portrays a forgotten part of left-wing activism inside and outside Austria's social democracy.

While the anti-colonial movement against the French occupation of North Africa grew in Algeria, European leftists started solidarity movements with the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), the armed Algerian liberation movement. Neither the French Social Democratic party nor the Communist party supported the armed struggle of the FLN. Therefore, it was predominantly the non-orthodox leftists who became active and helped the Algerian resistance all over Europe. Non-orthodox communists like the Egyptian Jew Henri Curiel played a crucial role for the support network of the FLN in France. The famous *'porteurs de valises'* (suitcase carriers) helped to carry money, munitions, and propaganda for the FLN.

France was not the only European country where leftists supported the struggle of the FLN in Algeria. In other European countries, leftists began to help the FLN in the 1950s. In Austria, this work was carried out by activists from the youth organization of the social democratic



Fritz Keller

## GELEBTER INTERNATIONALISMUS

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party (SPÖ), Communists, Trotskyites, and some independent individuals. The youth organization of the SPÖ was at that time far to the left of the leadership of the party. However, Fritz Keller points out that the leadership of the SPÖ helped in one sense by helping Austrians who deserted the French Légion Étrangère (Foreign Legion) to return to their native land.

Besides the impressive biographies of activists like Winfried Müller, alias Si Mustapha (1926-1993), who later became the Algerian undersecretary of state for tourism under Ahmed Ben Bella, Reimar Holzinger (b. 1923), the artist Otto Rudolf Schatz (1900-1961), the communist Eva Priester (1910-1982), or the Trotskyite and former Catholic monk Heinrich Schüller (1901-1962), the support of Austrian officials for deserters of the Légion is maybe the most interesting aspect of Keller's work. The highest ranking politicians of the SPÖ, including Bruno Kreisky, at that time minister of foreign affairs, or the diplomat Rudolf Kirchschräger, who later became president in 1974, were helping to bring back Austrian members of the Légion. The Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs helped to repatriate Austrian légionnaires and helped them avoid penalization.

Keller's impressive work also demonstrates the importance of the FLN solidarity movement for the new Austrian left as a precursor of the 1968 generation that later became politicized through Vietnam. The coming to power of authoritarian military leaders in Algeria after its independence and the import of ideas of the "new left" from Germany pushed the memory of this aspect of the history of the Austrian left aside. It is to Fritz Keller's credit that he has brought it back so vividly.

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interested in using this historical moment to ask "about film itself: what it has been, what it has meant, and what it can do" (263; 273).

Such questions about the status of cinema are refocused in the analyses of Stefan Ruzowitzky's films, now addressing the status of genres, specifically the horror film, the Heimat film, the Holocaust film, and the Austrokomödie. The essays in this section highlight the potential of these outdated, clichéd, or unappreciated genres, as they are able to index, but at the same time transcend, the national cinematic history which structures them. Whereas Alexandra Ludewig shows that the horror film works creatively with its heritage and can still "move beyond the attribution of nationalistic traits in [an] exploration of evil," Rachel Palfreyman focuses on the Heimat film that turns critical and can then offer new perspectives on class divisions (288). While the environment of the characters in Ruzowitzky's Holocaust film, according to Raymond Burt, "becomes the world in microcosm," thereby asking spectators how they are able to live "in

luxury while [other] people are starving," the Austro-comedy calls attention to national concerns, but Regina Standún identifies that it also "consists of supranational elements" (312, 318, 329).

Contemporary images of Austria and new techniques for capturing them are explored in the final section of this book. Christoph Huber remarks on Michael Glawogger's tendency to undermine the separation between "authentic" and staged techniques, and this resonates with Hubert Sauper's documentary filmmaking that, as Arno Russegger states, critically inspects "the manipulative power of the medium" (352). Sara Hall's analysis of Götz Spielmann's *Antares*, on the other hand, demonstrates how the use of fiction can also be effective for realizing a stratified modern Austria, an image that contrasts with the proliferation of its idyllic tourist imagery.

This book opens by referencing a 2006 *New York Times* article that characterized Austria as the "world capital of feel-bad cinema," and then sets out to complicate this aesthetic, an objective

which the diverse and engaging contributions more than accomplish. The final chapter returns to this statement, asking readers to reflect on its status five years and over 300 pages later. Here, Götz Spielmann chimes in. The interviewer asks whether there is a potential space for optimism in his films, a suggestion that runs through many of the essays in this volume. Spielmann responds: "My movies are, I would say, children of optimism. And that doesn't mean to say that they are sentimental, or kitschy, or blind to reality. But in my opinion they have strength and energy that's bigger, and more profound, than the problems, the conflicts, the injustices, that we're talking about here." (375). Beyond the pessimistic storylines, it seems, there is another level on which these films function, a productive, didactic and perhaps even optimistic level that is tested and chronicled in this unique and valuable collection of current perspectives.

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