

Gabriella Hauch: “It is necessary to speak clearly and frankly.” Josef Strasser (1870–1935): a democratic communist in Austria

Abstract

Josef Strasser came to prominence in 1912 and was a member of an international network of Socialists who opposed the First World War and joined the new communist parties. Together with his wife, Isa, he joined the Austrian party in 1919. He was the oldest and only popular Social Democrat who went over to the (small) Austrian Communist Party (KPÖ).

This article focuses on Strasser’s time as a Communist, when he was editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Soziale Revolution* (later *Rote Fahne*) and a member of the party’s executive committee. Because of his disagreement with the strategy of “direct action” in 1919 and the party’s increasing authoritarian direction, he resigned from both his leading party positions in 1922. Yet, from 1923 to 1927 the Strassers lived in Moscow, where they became sympathizers of the Trotsky’s faction; they were already acquainted with him since their time in Vienna. For a short period Strasser returned to work in the KPÖ, but resigned his position as editor-in-chief once again on response to the party’s increasing Stalinism.

In 1929 Isa was excluded from the KPÖ and Josef went into ‘internal emigration’. However, it was not until 1933, when the parliamentary system in Austria was destroyed by ‘Austrofascism’, that he wrote a final article in the German section of the Left Opposition newspaper *Unser Wort* that dealt with the failure of Austromarxism to transform Austria into a Socialist society without oppression.

Über die Autorin

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