

In the brilliant world of Vienna at the advent of the twentieth century four men—Karl Renner, Otto Bauer, Max Adler, and Friedrich Adler—sought to develop political and economic solutions to the cultural tensions that strained the bonds of the Austrian Hungarian Empire. Humanistic ideals inherited from Viennese culture coupled with contemporary scientific theories of society turned them toward a socialism couched in terms of Marxist ideology.

In this highly original study of the Austro-Marxists, Mark E. Blum uses the insights of depth psychology to trace the roots of their political philosophy in their family and social backgrounds. From an analysis of their personalities, of the linguistic features of their writings, and of the cultural contexts of their political activities, he shows that Marxist ideology became for them not a description of objective thought and action but a metaphor enabling them to deal with personal problems and needs. Thus blinded to reality, they were fatally impaired in their attempts to seek resolution for the problems confronting Austrian society.

The study concludes with a depiction of the four men caught up in the turmoil of Vienna during the First World War, which exposed the strengths and weaknesses of their political personalities when faced with a clear call for deeds, not rhetoric. It reaches a dramatic climax in the assassination of the Austrian prime minister by Friedrich Adler who vainly sought thereby to stir his fellow socialists to revolutionary action.

*The Austro-Marxists* is the first book to offer a systematic examination of the thought and milieu of these four thinkers. The only major work on the subject in English, it is a significant contribution to the history of European socialism and, in particular, to the development of Marxist thought outside Russia.

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