

**FROM POPULIST PROTEST TO INCUMBENCY:
THE STRATEGIC CHALLENGES FACING JÖRG HAIDER'S
FREEDOM PARTY OF AUSTRIA (FPÖ)**

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FROM POPULIST PROTEST TO INCUMBENCY: THE STRATEGIC CHALLENGES FACING JÖRG HAIDER'S FREEDOM PARTY OF AUSTRIA (FPÖ)

Kurt Richard Luther

1 Introduction

The prelude to the formation of Austria's current 'black-blue' coalition between the Christian-democratic Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei*, or ÖVP) and the radical right-wing Freedom Party of Austria (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, or FPÖ) caused enormous domestic and international controversy. Moreover, the swearing in of the FPÖ ministers on 4 February 2000 triggered the threatened diplomatic 'measures' (i.e.: sanctions) of the EU-14 and their associates. Other contributors to this panel will address the nature of these sanctions, their direct impact on Austria and the European Union, as well as their potential longer term implications for both. The aim of this paper, however, is different. It will focus neither on the extent to which the European Union has been '*Austracized*', nor on the manner and implications for the EU or Austria of the latter being *ostracized* by the former. Instead, it aims to address the possible impact of the Freedom Party's entry into government upon core dimensions of the party itself.

Political parties play a central role in modern liberal democratic theory, constituting an indispensable link between the sovereign people and the politicians to whom the exercise of the affairs of the state are temporarily entrusted via the electoral process. In sum, political parties can be regarded as perhaps the most important structures by means of which it is possible to bridge the inherent tension within all modern democracies between the authorising *demos* on the one hand and the authorised politicians on the other (the principal-agent relationship).

It is therefore unsurprising that political parties have also always been central research objects for empirical political science, which has concerned itself with above all five key dimensions of political parties.¹ First, it has stressed that political parties are vote-seeking organisations, which participate in public elections, where they present candidates and conduct campaigns. Indeed, many political scientists consider parties' participation in the electoral market as the distinguishing feature of political parties. Second, empirical political science has investigated the ideological values that political parties embody and which are usually most firmly rooted amongst party functionaries ('mid-level elites') and ordinary party members. These ideological values are in turn reflected in political parties' selection and marketing of policy preferences. Third, it is widely accepted that in order to realise their policy preferences, but also as a consequence of their desire to exercise political power,

¹ The literature on these 5 dimensions includes, for example: Budge & Farlie (1976); Budge & Keman (1990); Budge, Robertson & Hearl (1987); Crotty (1970); Dalton, Flanagan & Beck (1984); Duverger (1954); Janda (1980); Katz & Mair (1992 & 1993); Katz & Mair et al. (1992) Laver & Schofield (1991); Lawson (1980); Luther & Müller-Rommel (forthcoming); Mair (1997) Michels (1915); Müller and Strom (1999); Panebianco (1988); Sartori (1976).

political parties (and above all their elites) are office-seeking. Fourth, a significant proportion of empirical political science research on political parties has of late stressed the importance of looking inside the 'black box' of party organisation and investigating, for example, how political parties structure and organise themselves in order to exercise their mobilisation and linkage function vis-à-vis society, but also to recruit political elites, or potential holders of public office. As has been argued since the time of Michels (1915), a corollary of this organisational dimension is that political parties are inevitably very concerned with self-maintenance, which requires them to secure adequate resources (e.g. financial, political and personnel) and to mitigate intra-party tensions. Finally, a number of political scientists have focused their attention upon the constant external competition between political parties. These competitive party relationships comprise the relevant party system, which can be investigated both as a dependent and as an independent variable.

If one examines the history of the FPÖ by reference to the above mentioned five empirical dimensions it is possible to divide the development of the party between its foundation in 1956 and the general election of 4 October 1999 into four broad periods (Luther 1991, 247). These are its period as a *ghetto party*, which lasted until the mid-1960s; the *normalisation* period until the mid 1970s; the period of *acceptance*, which commenced in the late 1970s and lasted until September 1986 and, finally, the period of *populist protest* that was triggered by Jörg Haider's assumption of the party leadership on 15 September 1986. Since its hotly contested entry into Austria's federal government on 4 February 2000, the FPÖ has now entered a new period, which one might perhaps designate as that of *government responsibility*.²

All political parties undertaking the shift from opposition to governmental responsibility are confronted with significant challenges and it was only to be expected that this transition would be particularly demanding for the Freedom Party. For one, it is worth bearing in mind the impact of the external democratic deligitimation of the FPÖ embodied in the sanctions of the EU-14. Closely related to this is what Pelinka (2001) refers to as the 'singularity' (*Besonderheit*) of the FPÖ, which according to him is located less in the structure and issues of the party, than in its rootedness in Austria's National Socialist past.³ Third, the party's entry into government came immediately after a period of populist protest *par excellence*, which had lasted from 1986 to 1999. During this period, which coincides with Jörg Haider's leadership, the FPÖ had succeeded in fighting its way from an existentially threatened party to a position where it had become Austria's second strongest electoral force. The vehemence of the political confrontations of these years resulted in relations between FPÖ politicians and other political actors becoming in part very strained, which could in turn undermine the capacity of the current party leadership to find partners willing to support its political objectives. Fourth, the new period in which the FPÖ finds itself will necessarily require a fundamental rethinking and restructuring of its position in Austria's electoral market, of its policy preferences, of its internal organisation and recruitment, as well as of its relations to Austria's other political parties. In short, the Freedom Party's entry into national government may well

² During its first spell in government (with the SPÖ from 1983 until 1986/87) the FPÖ was an extremely weak coalition partner that was suffered, or 'accepted'. The FPÖ's position in the Schüssel/Riess-Passer government is very different, however. Because of its much greater electoral and parliamentary strength, but also in view of the portfolios it holds, the FPÖ is now very much an equal and thus *responsible* coalition partner.

³ We will return to the question of the FPÖ's 'singularity' in the closing remarks of this paper.

constitute the peak of its very steep upward development since 1986, but its transition from populist protest to governmental responsibility necessarily implies profound strategic challenges for the party. These challenges apply in respect of each of the core dimensions of political parties outlined above.

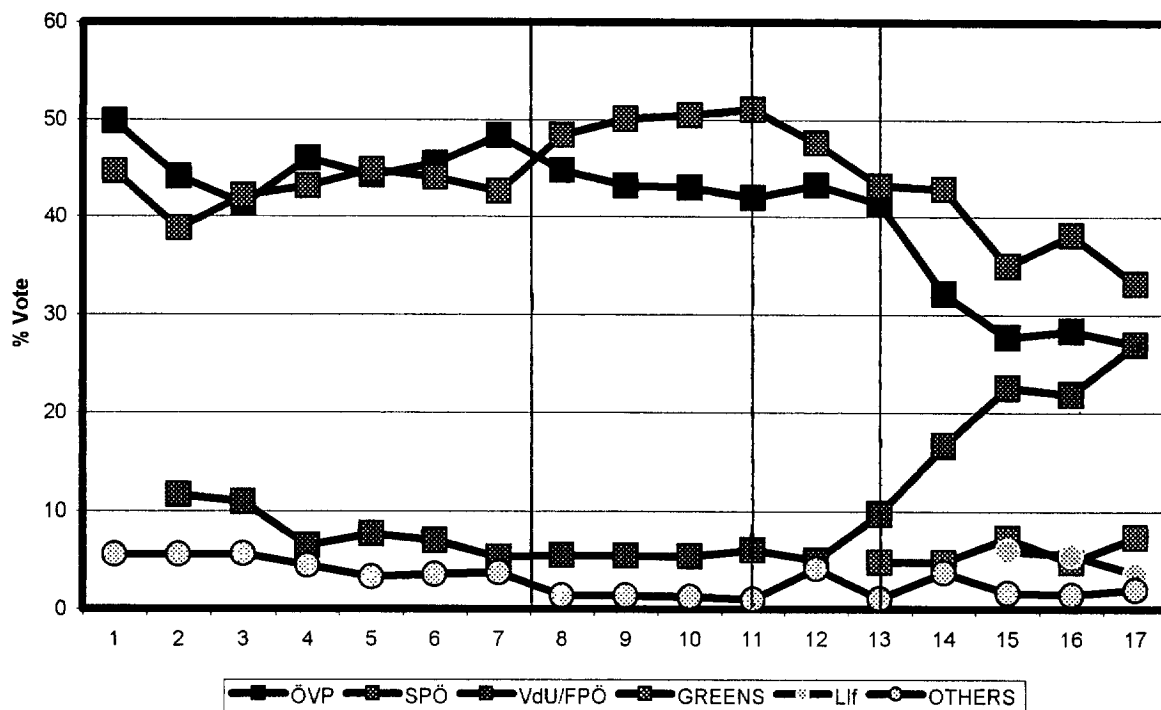
To discuss each and every one of these dimensions would exceed the scope of this paper. Accordingly, the latter will restrict itself above all to a consideration of the Freedom Party's role in Austria's electoral market, as well to the party's internal organisation and elite recruitment. We will in respect of both aspects first seek to establish how and with which strategic orientation the party operated in the period(s) prior to its entry into government. Thereafter, we will identify the most important challenges and strategic dilemmas which the FPÖ will have to address as a consequence of its entry into Austria's federal government. Since it is only just over a year since this radical change in the party's political circumstances, it is as yet too early to be sure about the extent to which the structures and behaviours which the party employed prior to February 2000 remain appropriate for the period of governmental responsibility. There has also been only a relatively short period of time to observe any possible changes in the party's electoral and organisational profile. Accordingly, this paper's assessment of the strategic and organisational challenges facing the FPÖ is thus necessarily provisional.

2. The FPÖ in Austria's Electoral Market

Figure 1 illustrates the development of the Freedom Party's share of the vote at general elections held between 1956 and 1999. Electorally, the *ghetto period* was characterised by decline, whilst the *normalisation period* was above all a time of stabilisation of the party's share of the vote, albeit at a relatively low level.⁴ Under the liberal leadership of Norbert Steger, the party's period of *acceptance* peaked in the first ever Freedom Party participation in national government. In terms of its position in the electoral market, however, the party was located at the edge of the political abyss. Its 1983 general election result constituted an historic low (4.98 percent), and in public opinion surveys conducted during 1985 and 1986, it appears that only two to three percent of Austrian voters supported the party. It was largely as a consequence of the intra-party dissatisfaction generated by this existential crisis that Jörg Haider was able to take over the leadership in a hotly contested internal election. This initiated a strategic reorientation of the FPÖ, which henceforth became a party of *populist protest* (Luther 1987, 213 ff). This reorientation was electorally extremely successful. At the general election of 1986, held merely a few weeks after Haider became leader, the party immediately doubled the share of the vote it had received in 1983. By the general election of 15 October 1999, the party's share of the national vote had grown to some 27.2 percent, over five times larger than its 1983 share.

⁴ The modest increase in the party's share of the vote of the 1979 general election did not fulfil the expectations of the then leadership.

Figure 1 Party Shares of the Vote at Austrian General Elections



If one examines the results of the general election exit polls regularly conducted by Fessler+GfK, it is clear that the aggregate increase of some 17 points in the Freedom Party's electoral share between 1983 and 1999 was distributed very unevenly between the different segments of the electorate.⁵ The changes are indicated in Table 1. This shows that the Freedom Party's electoral growth was lowest amongst white-collar voters (+9) and farmers (+5). By contrast, the party's electoral support grew most among men (+20 points on average and +23 points among unemployed men), but above all among blue-collar voters (+37). Haider's party was also disproportionately successful in mobilising the support of the young (mainly male but also female) voters; in 1999, the FPÖ's share of the under 29 year olds was 35 percent. In 1986, it had been merely 12 percent.⁶ One of the most distinctive results of this ongoing reorientation of Austria's electorate is the fact that between 1979 and 1999, the party was able to increase its share of the blue-collar vote from 4 to 47 percent, making the FPÖ the strongest party in this segment of the electorate.⁷

The above mentioned changes in FPÖ support within the various segments of Austria's electoral market have had a less marked impact upon the socio-structural profile of the FPÖ electorate itself (Plasser et al. 1999: 39). When compared with the electorates of Austria's other parliamentary parties, that of the FPÖ is still disproportionately male (1986 61%; 1999 62%), and has unusually high levels of voters with vocational education (1986: 56%; 1989: 55%). It shares with the SPÖ the distinction of having the lowest proportion of voters qualified for university study and/or with a degree (30%). In respect of occupational structure, the FPÖ electorate

⁵ The following data derive from the Fessler+GfK polls, the latest of which is reported in Plasser et al. (1999).

⁶ The data for the other parties are as follows: SPÖ 25%, ÖVP 17%, Greens 14% and LIF 4%.

⁷ In 1979, the SPÖ obtained 63% of the blue collar vote, but in 1999 was supported by only 35 percent of Austrian workers. See also Luther 2000, 430 ff.

is distinct by virtue of still having the lowest proportion of civil servants.⁸ In other respects, however, there have indeed been changes in the profile of the FPÖ electorate. In 1986 white-collar workers constituted 27 percent and blue-collar workers only 22 percent of the party's vote. By 1999, white-collar workers (27 percent) had just pipped blue-collar voters (26 percent) into first place as the largest occupational group within the FPÖ's electorate. Compared to Austria's other parties, the Freedom Party's electorate now has the highest proportion of workers and shares with that of the ÖVP the distinction of having the lowest proportion of salaried voters.⁹ Young voters (i.e. those under 29 years of age) and those between 30 and 44 years old are over-represented in the FPÖ's electorate. The former group is only more strongly represented within the electorate of the Greens (38 percent as opposed to 27 percent in the FPÖ) and the latter group only in the electorate of the Greens and Liberal Forum (FPÖ 34 percent; Greens and Liberal Forum each 38 percent). However, if one examines the change between 1986 and 1999 in the age profile of the FPÖ electorate, one sees that the 18 to 29 year-olds' share of the FPÖ electorate has fallen by 4 points, whilst that of the 30 to 44 year olds has increased by 2 percentage points (and that of the 45 to 59 year-olds by some 7 points). It is too early to draw firm conclusions from these data, but it does appear that we are possibly witnessing a certain ageing of the FPÖ electorate, possibly as a result of a cohort effect.

Table 1: Freedom Party vote within selected social groups (1986 and 1999)

| | 1986 | 1999 | Change |
|---------------------------------|------|------|--------|
| Overall | 10 | 27 | +17 |
| Men | 12 | 32 | +20 |
| employed | 13 | 33 | +20 |
| unemployed | 11 | 34 | +23 |
| pensioners | | 28 | |
| Women | 7 | 21 | +14 |
| employed | 7 | 22 | +15 |
| unemployed | 8 | 22 | +14 |
| pensioners | 5 | 19 | +14 |
| Age | | | |
| 18-29 | 12 | 35 | +23 |
| 30-44 | 11 | 29 | +18 |
| 45-59 | 6 | 21 | +15 |
| 60-69 | 8 | 21 | +13 |
| 70 plus | 9 | 25 | +19 |
| Occupation | | | |
| self-employed/ professionals | 15 | 33 | +18 |
| farmers | 5 | 10 | + 5 |
| civil servants / public service | 9 | 20 | +11 |
| white-collar | 13 | 22 | + 9 |
| blue-collar skilled | 11 | 48 | +37 |
| blue-collar un/semi-skilled | 8 | 45 | +37 |
| housewives | 8 | 25 | +17 |
| pensioners | 7 | 24 | +17 |
| in schooling | 9 | 23 | +14 |

Source: Fessel+Gfk Exit Polls

⁸ The largest proportion is to be found in the electorate of the Greens (16%), followed by the ÖVP (11%).

⁹ Blue-collar voters: SPÖ 16%; ÖVP 7%; Greens 5%, and Liberal Forum 4%. White collar voters: Greens 64%; Liberal Forum 43% and SPÖ 34%.

The scale of the FPÖ's electoral success during its period of populist protest is not only unique in the history of the Second Austrian Republic, but has indeed barely been equalled in any other west European country during this period. The FPÖ's success has, of course, been facilitated by a range of different factors. Examples of external factors militating in favour of the FPÖ include

global socio-economic and cultural changes, the geo-political upheavals in Europe and the further weakening of Austria's political *Lager*. These developments have created uncertainty amongst the electorate and weakened its traditional party attachments. Second, elements of the opportunity structure have been important. Examples include Austria's proportional electoral system, the existence of the *Länder* as a second level of political power and the constitutionally required proportional composition of most *Land* governments, but also (subjective) political and economic failures of the political elite. (Luther 1997, 301)

Electoral success is, of course, never merely a product of external factors, but instead usually requires the identification and implementation of appropriate political strategies. During the period of populist protest, the dominant principle of the FPÖ's political strategy was vote maximisation. Haider summarised this strategic maxim in the phrase '*attackieren statt arrangieren*' (attack not accommodation).¹⁰ One of the most important and consciously chosen targets of this strategy were the overlapping electoral segments comprising those voters who were politically frustrated and those usually characterised as (potential) 'modernisation losers'. In order to win over these voters, the FPÖ opted for an aggressive campaigning style and employed political rhetoric that often bordered on the unbridled. Its core electoral issues included political corruption, over-foreignisation (*Überfremdung*), (immigrants)criminality, the alleged arrogance of the European Union and a celebration of the supposedly exemplary values of the 'little man'.¹¹ The fact that during this period the FPÖ had no political responsibility whatsoever for national politics and was dismissed by its competitors as qualitatively unsuitable for government (not least precisely because of the unrestrained nature of its campaigning style), only made it all the easier for the party constantly to engage in irresponsible electoral outbidding of the then governing parties (Luther/Deschouwer 1999 43 ff & 243 ff). Moreover, when compared to the SPÖ and ÖVP, the FPÖ had a markedly small party organisation and very few auxiliary organisations. Paradoxically, this worked to the FPÖ's advantage, since it allowed it to be much more flexible (or 'opportunistic') in terms of the policy preferences it used to mobilise voters. As has already been demonstrated above, the predominantly negative and literally 'irresponsible' campaigning which the FPÖ undertook during its period of populist protest was electorally extremely very successful.

In the three *Landtag* (provincial parliamentary) elections held since 4. February 2000, the party has experienced a marked downturn in its hitherto constantly improving electoral fortunes. At the Styrian elections of 15 October 2000, the FPÖ slumped from 17.2 percent (1995) to 12.4 percent of the vote. A more modest decline at the Burgenland elections of 3 December 2000 (12.6 percent versus 14.6 percent in 1996) nonetheless cost the party its only seat in the *Land* government. To date, the most significant loss the FPÖ has experienced since entering government has been at the Viennese provincial elections of March 2001. In 1996, the party had won 27.9 percent

¹⁰ Interview with the author in Vienna on 18. Feb. 1988.

¹¹ On the political style of the FPÖ during this period see the literature cited in Luther 1997.

of the vote, but was now supported by only 20.3 percent of Vienna's electorate. The significance of this result lies not only in the magnitude of the party's electoral decline, but also in the fact that Vienna comprises approximately one fifth of Austria's population

The reasons for these electoral reversals are closely related to the fundamental change that has taken place in the FPÖ's position in the electoral market. With its entry into national government, the FPÖ has surrendered the electoral advantage of 'irresponsibility' it had enjoyed. The party's claim to represent the 'small man' against 'the bigwigs' has understandably lost credibility. As in 1983, when Steger led the party into government with the SPÖ, the FPÖ has again immediately lost the support of many of those political disgruntled voters whose vote for the party was motivated above all by the desire to express political protest. It is possible that we may soon witness a similar development amongst modernisation losers, whom the party had assiduously courted in recent years.

The importance of the FPÖ's electoral losses should not, however, be exaggerated. First, we have to date, seen 'only' *Landtag* elections, which are of course second order elections and thus often strongly influenced by *Land*-specific factors. Second, the party's loss of votes has been far less extensive than many external observers had predicted and numerous party insiders had feared.¹² A possible reason for this are the 'sanctions', which from the EU-14's perspective may well have been somewhat counterproductive. For notwithstanding the considerable domestic political polarisation caused by the formation of the government, the sanctions militated in favour of a growth in Austrian patriotism/nationalism and may thus well have resulted in a degree of solidarisation with the governing parties. They also put the main opposition party in a very difficult position. For one, the SPÖ was clearly loathe to criticise the EU-14's decision to implement sanctions in response to the participation in Austria's government of a party that the SPÖ had itself for many years claimed to be beyond the political pale. On the other hand, the SPÖ did not wish to further expose itself to the charge (frequently levied in particular by the governing FPÖ) that by failing to speak out strongly against the sanctions it was being disloyal to Austria (*Staatsverräterer*). Moreover, given the predominance of the sanctions issue during the first six months or so of the government's life, the opposition was unable to focus public attention upon those aspects of the government's policy in respect of which the SPÖ felt the ÖVP and FPÖ were most vulnerable to attack. Examples include increased taxation and cuts in welfare benefits. Whether or not the lifting of sanctions will result in a normalisation of political competition and thus a worsening of the position of above all the FPÖ in Austria's electoral market can as yet not be confidently predicted.

On the other hand, there is as yet no convincing evidence to suggest that the electoral shifts since the FPÖ entered government constitutes a real threat to the continued existence of the coalition, let alone to the survival of the FPÖ (as between 1983 and 1986). Finally, it is important to note that leading FPÖ figures have for years been aware of the likely consequence for the party's electoral fortunes if its strategy of vote maximisation were ever to enable it to enter government. As early as spring 1998, for example, Haider told the author of this paper that the party must resist the temptation of entering government until it had achieved a share of the vote

¹² Numerous interviews conducted by the author in recent years with party members and activists.

such that the inevitable electoral losses that would follow such a move would not place the party in the kind of existential crisis it had experienced under Steger's leadership. He was also of the view that by entering government on the basis of a massively increased electoral following, the party would be much more likely to be in a position to influence the substance of government policy in a manner that would help minimise the loss of electoral support and might indeed even enable the party to mitigate those losses by increasing its support among other segments of the electorate.

The FPÖ's decision to enter government did not indicate a rejection of the goal of vote maximisation, which many members of the party leadership had in any event always seen as a means to the end of government participation. Instead, it should be regarded as a prioritisation of (remaining in) government. This priority will presumably dominate the party's strategic thinking for the next few years. The relative strengths of Austria's parliamentary parties and the markedly poor relations between the FPÖ on the one hand and the SPÖ and the Greens on the other, mean that if the FPÖ is to realise its goal of remaining in government, it will for the foreseeable future have to do so in a 'black-blue' coalition, i.e. in co-operation with the ÖVP.

The FPÖ needs to formulate a revised electoral strategy if it is successfully to counter its expected loss of votes and the concomitant electoral revitalisation of the SPÖ. For the electoral strategy which the party employed with such success during its period of populist protest is likely to be much less suited for a governing party. The party has to make important strategic decisions in respect of at least three dimensions of its relationship to Austria's electoral market. First, it is likely that the very negative campaigning issues the party has consistently utilised since 1986 will no longer be as electorally profitable. The party will thus have to identify new core issues. The party leadership has already decided to make much of the FPÖ's alleged governmental competence. However, it is not yet clear how – if at all – the voters can be convinced that a party which during the years 1986 to 2000 constituted the embodiment of populist protest has now become a competent party of government. Indeed, given the party's lack of experience in government, it is perhaps unsurprising that during the first year or so of its governmental term, FPÖ ministers have committed a number of political blunders and ministerial turnover has been high. Another important test of the party's credibility as a government party will be whether it is able, in its new capacity, to remain aloof from the practices of political patronage (*Proporz*) which it itself did much to delegitimise and label as corrupt. Whether or not the party is successful in this endeavour will of course in large measure be determined by the behaviour of it and its ministerial team, as well as by the extent to which the FPÖ is able to convince the electorate to attribute the more government's more beneficial policy outputs to the FPÖ.¹³

The second strategic challenge for the FPÖ is closely related to the issue of its public image and has to do with how it proposes to change its hitherto very aggressive style of voter mobilisation. It is no longer appropriate for the FPÖ to conduct itself in the electoral market in the manner it did during its period of populist protest. For one, the main target of the aggressive rhetoric of this period was above all the incumbent

¹³ This paper has deliberately chosen not to discuss policy outputs. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that FPÖ portfolios include ministries whose outputs may well be rather unpopular in times of austerity such as these. These include above all the Ministry of Finance, but also the Ministry of Social Affairs.

political class. In view of the fundamental changed political role of the FPÖ, such an approach is likely to be regarded by the electorate as somewhat unconvincing, could not of course be applied to the FPÖ ministers themselves and would be viewed by the party's coalition partner as unacceptable. In addition, retaining this unrestrained mobilisation style would in all likelihood bring renewed difficulties for Austria's external relations, especially since the formal lifting of the sanctions has most certainly not resulted in the end of Austria's 'ostracisation' and its full international 'rehabilitation'. Since the aggressive political style of the period of populist protest is closely associated with Haider himself, however, it is likely to be very difficult for the party to change the tone of the manner in which it operates in the public arena. For there is no doubt that, despite the fact that he resigned the party leadership in favour of Susanne Riess-Passer on 1 May 2000 and is himself now allegedly merely an 'ordinary member', Haider remains not only a member of the government coalition committee, but also plays a key role in the making of most of the FPÖ's strategic decisions.

A third strategic decision in respect of the party's electoral role – and one that is also unresolved – concerns the identity of those segments of the electorate which the FPÖ should prioritise. At least two questions are important here. The first relates to the priority that should in future be given to attracting blue collar-voters. Some influential members of the party believe that the FPÖ must maintain – and seek to make increasingly credible – its claim to represent the interests of the working classes. It would, these persons believe, seriously undermine the political credibility of the party if it were now to abandon the interests of the 'small man', whose vote the party has in recent years assiduously sought. Accordingly, they argue that this defence of working class interests should not only be underscored verbally, but also by ensuring that the party is seen to be acting within the governing coalition in support of workers' interests, in particular via targeted changes in the areas of fiscal and social policy.¹⁴ Other key figures within the FPÖ consider this strategy to be mistaken. In their opinion, it would serve no useful purpose for the party to target its electoral strategy on a segment of the population that is declining overall, is disproportionately composed of modernisation losers and has hitherto been decidedly clientelistic in its orientation. This second group maintains that this blue collar segment is also being targeted by the SPÖ and that the proposed measures exceed what is economically viable and would in turn thus undermine the party's strategy of seeking to create for itself the image of governmental competence. This group has been referred to as the economic wing of the FPÖ and its alternative strategy is for the party to place much more emphasis on mobilising white and self-employed voters.¹⁵ The intra-party conflict between these opposing strategies is still underway. However this conflict is eventually resolved, there is a second strategic question the FPÖ needs to address, namely, which additional electoral segments the party ought to target. In purely numerical terms, a promising target would of course be women, who have to date been disproportionately underrepresented in the party's

¹⁴ In early 2001, one of the strongest (but not necessarily most influential) of intra-party voices supporting this line has been that of Rainer Gaugg, a Carinthian MP. It is worth noting that the party holds the relevant government portfolios, which should enable it to implement those measures, as well as to ensure that they can be 'sold' as FPÖ achievements.

¹⁵ The persons most usually identified by the Austrian media as being identified with this wing are Thomas Prinzhorn, a millionaire FPÖ industrialist and MP, who is currently the party's deputy speaker in the national parliament and Karl-Heinz Grasser, the FPÖ's youthful Finance Minister. The strategic and substantive reflections of this economic wing are similar in many respects to those held by Steger during the period of his leadership. See Luther (1997 548 ff).

electorate (see above). The party has been aware of this for years and has made deliberate efforts to appeal to women voters. Its first tactic was to recruit women to leading positions on the party's electoral list, but this tactic was not very successful.¹⁶ Since the mid 1990's, the party adopted an additional tactic, namely, to supplement the 'hard' themes with which it was associated (e.g. anti-immigration, corruption and crime) with 'softer' themes such as increasing child allowances – the 'cheque for children' (*Kinderscheck*) – which the party's electoral strategists believe would appeal more to women. There is little evidence to date that this has indeed been the case.

In short, the party's entry into government has forced it to review the themes, tone, style and targets of its behaviour in Austria's electoral market. The actual extent of the electoral losses that will be suffered by the FPÖ – which has for so long and so vehemently pursued a strategy of populist protest – will of course depend to a considerable extent upon whether the FPÖ is able to develop a new electoral strategy and one that is more appropriate to its changed political role in Austria's party system. A further determinant of the political future of the party relates to the extent to which it is able to ensure that such a revised strategy is accepted by all the important groups within the party and successfully implemented through their wholehearted application. The next section of this paper attempts to evaluate some of the intra-party tensions that will help determine the outcome of this latter question.

3. Internal Organisation and Elite Recruitment

If one is seeking to examine the external behaviour of a political party, as was the case in the preceding section of this paper, there is much to be said for treating it as a single actor. If one wishes to investigate its internal life, however, it soon becomes clear that political parties are very complex organisations, within which there is a constant struggle between competing personalities, groups and goals. Katz and Mair (1993 593 ff) have suggested that it is useful to conceive of the internal life of political parties as comprising three 'faces', which reflect differing interests. These are a) the 'party on the ground', whose most important elements include the party membership and the party organisation, which is usually based upon the principle of territoriality; b) the 'party in public office', which relates above all to those office holders organised in parliamentary parties, but also encompasses members of the political executive; c) the 'party central office' and the key national party bodies that are closely associated with it (e.g. the party executive and the party directorate). Katz and Mair of course accept that this heuristically motivated simplification is of necessity unable to capture the whole complexity of internal party life and that the three 'faces' in reality overlap. This caveat is potentially even more important in respect of Austria, a country in which there is an above average frequency of role accumulation. The following discussion of the FPÖ's internal tensions and the resulting strategic challenges for the party is structured according to Katz and Mair's framework.

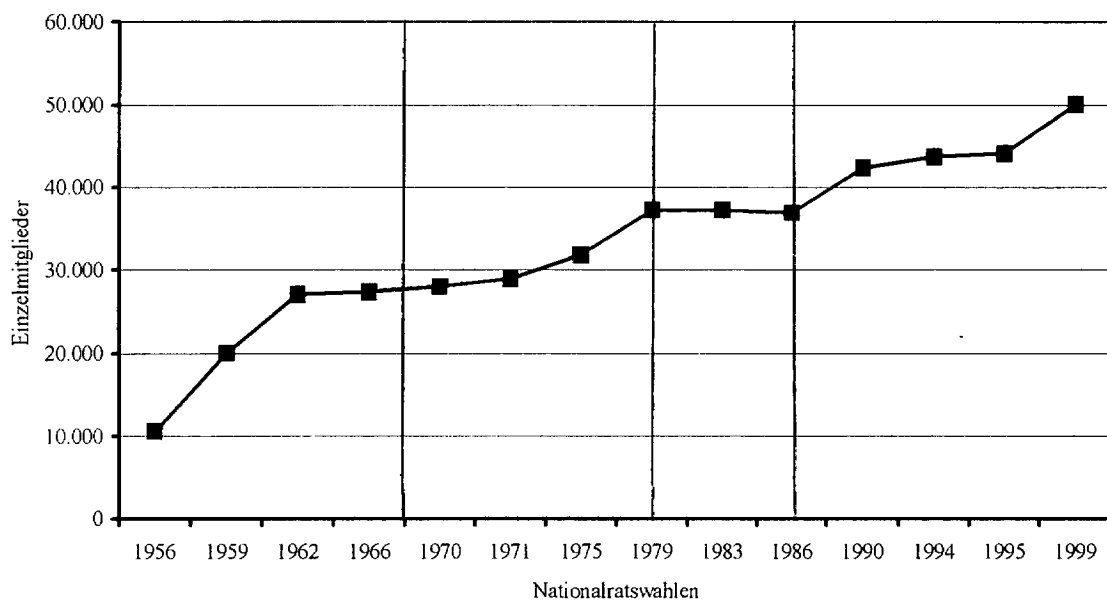
3.1. Party on the Ground

¹⁶ One of the most prominent women to be promoted to a leading position in the FPÖ was Heide Schmidt, who in 1993 was to lead a group of FPÖ MPs that defected from the party and formed the Liberal Forum.

Extent of Membership.

Figure 2 depicts the development of the FPÖ's total membership during the four periods of the party's history. The *ghetto period* was one during which the party's organisation was built up and is thus predictably characterised by an increasing membership. It was followed by the *normalisation period*, in the second half of which the membership stagnation which the party had experienced since about 1962 was replaced by a visible upwards trend, which comprised some 35% during this period. The short *period of acceptance* was characterised by an (albeit modest) decline in the party's membership. During the period of populist protest, the FPÖ's membership again started to rise; by 1999 it had increased by a further 40%.

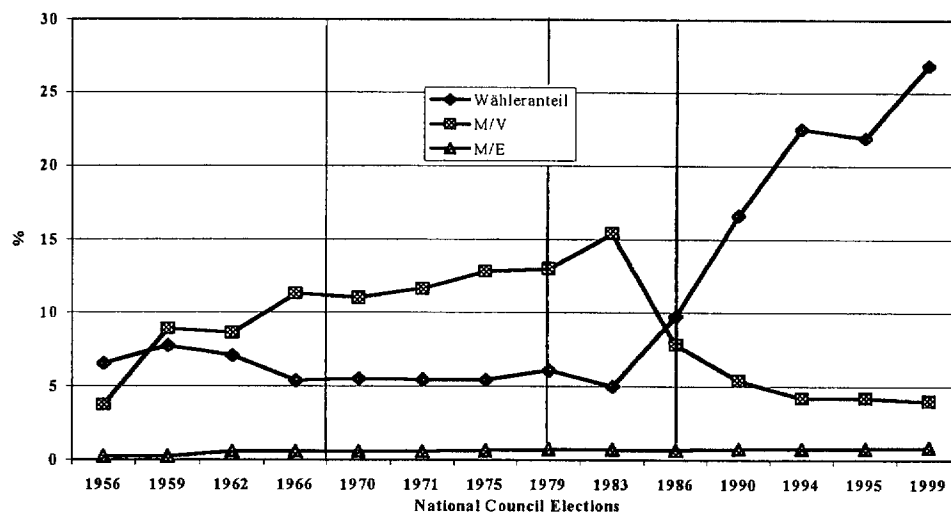
Figure 2: FPÖ Party Membership 1956-1999



The relationship between the party's political behaviour on the one hand and its electoral results and membership development on the other is hinted at in Figure 3.¹⁷ The strategy of normalisation halted the electoral decline the party had experienced during its ghetto period; it stabilised the FPÖ's share of the electorate and helped the party recruit new members. On the other hand, the period of acceptance, during which the party entered government for the first time, resulted not only in what was for the party a very worrying decline in its share of the electoral market, but also led to the first and to date only decline in its membership figure. To be sure, that decline was limited, but is likely to have given the present leadership considerable cause for concern about the potential development of its membership base since it re-entered government in February 2000. During the period of populist protest, the party's membership rose from 37,000 to over 51,000, which constitutes an average annual increase of approx. 1,135 persons (see also Table 2).

¹⁷ On the development and goals of the party's strategy see Luther 1991, 1997, 1995a and 1995b, which are predicated upon over 150 interviews the author has conducted with party members, leaders and activists.

Figure 3: FPÖ Vote and Membership Density During the Four Periods of the Party's Development (1956-1999)



M/V = FPÖ-Members/FPÖ Voters
M/E = FPÖ-Members/Austrian /Electorate

The fact that the party's increased membership during this most recent period was accompanied by an even more dramatic increase in its electoral success meant that the party's membership density – as measured in terms of M/V – declined significantly (see Figure 3).¹⁸ Some observers of the FPÖ have interpreted this as a failure of the party and/or as a development that is worrying from the perspective of normative democratic theory. There are at least four reasons why such an interpretation is inappropriate. For one, the first criticism appears to be predicated upon the erroneous assumption that the party had during this period set itself the goal of achieving a membership increase commensurate with its electoral growth. There were of course attempts made during this period to recruit new members, but voter maximisation was *the* strategic priority of the party. The FPÖ never pursued the goal of developing itself in the direction of a membership based mass party, as is indicated by the leadership's plans (which in the event were never fully implemented) to transform the party into a 'citizens' movement' that would have had much looser links with individuals (Luther 1997, 291 ff). Second, as Figure 3 shows, if one examines the development of the FPÖ's membership in relation to the total electorate (M/E), it is clear that – contrary to the expectations of many analysts – the FPÖ has indeed increased its organisational density during the period of populist protest. At the same time, the membership figures of both ÖVP and SPÖ declined markedly.¹⁹ Third, the ideal typical mass party is only one of the many existing party types. The ÖVP and

¹⁸ The M/V value at the general election of 1979 was 13 percent; in 1983, when the party membership was stable but its share of the electorate declined it stood at 15.4 percent; the doubling of the party's share of the vote in 1986 reduced M/V to 7.8 percent and in 1999 it was only some 4.3 percent. By way of comparison, the average value for the period 1966 to 1983 inclusive was circa 12.5 percent. On the relative utility of the different measures contained in Figure 3, see Katz & Mair et al (1992, 329 ff).

¹⁹ The average FPÖ value for 1966 to 1983 inclusive was 0.63 percent. In 1986 it 0.68 percent and in 1999 stood at 0.86 percent. The M/E value of the SPÖ in 1986 was 12.3 percent but had by 1999 been halved.

SPÖ still embody features of this type much more than do the political parties of most other countries. However, many other organisational forms of political parties are compatible with normative democratic theory. As long ago as in the work of Michels (1915), empirical political science demonstrated that the internal processes of the mass party should not be regarded as a realisation of democratic ideals. After all, political parties' above mentioned function of democratic legitimation should be seen as deriving less from their organisational penetration of society than (as mentioned above) from intra-party competition in the electoral market.

Membership Composition

For most of the forty-five years of the FPÖ's existence, the constituent provincial party organisations with the highest absolute levels of membership were those of Upper Austria, Carinthia, Styria, and Salzburg (in that order). In 1986, they together still comprised over three quarters of the party's total membership. By October 2000, their combined share had dropped to 'only' 58% (See Table 2). During period of populist protest, the party's total membership rose, but the development within each individual provincial party group varied considerably. In absolute terms, membership figures changed from + 4,742 and – 2,072, i.e. between + 196% and – 28% (see table 1), though it is worth noting that the decline in absolute membership levels was to a significant extent a product of an exercise in weeding out from the lists of party members those persons who were members merely on paper. The four provincial party units where the membership levels increased most dramatically were those whose organisational density had traditionally been rather low and where the party's potential for mobilising additional members was as a consequence in principle greatest. The best examples are the Lower Austrian and Viennese party groups, the membership of which increased by 4,742 (+ 196%) and 3,483 (+ 194%) respectively. By contrast, Carinthia suffered a decline of some 2,072 members (- 28%).

Table 2: Development of the FPÖ's Membership (1986-2000)

| Land Group | Members | | Change 1986-2000 | | Share of Members (%) | | Change of share | Women (%) |
|---------------|---------|--------|---------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|--------------------|--------------|
| | 1986 | 2000 | abs. | % | 1986 | 2000 | 1986-'00 | 2000 |
| Burgenland | 603 | 1,567 | + 964 | + 160 | 1.6 | 3.1 | + 1.5 | 20.0 |
| Carinthia | 7,488 | 5,416 | - 2,072 | - 28 | 20.4 | 10.6 | - 9.8 | 20.9 |
| Lower Austria | 2,423 | 7,165 | + 4,742 | + 196 | 6.6 | 14.0 | + 7.4 | 25.7 |
| Upper Austria | 9,124 | 12,497 | + 3 373 | + 40 | 24.9 | 24.4 | - 0.5 | 26.7 |
| Salzburg | 4,287 | 4,830 | - 543 | + 13 | 11.7 | 9.4 | - 2.3 | 27.3 |
| Styria | 6,679 | 6,870 | + 191 | + 3 | 18.2 | 13.4 | - 4.8 | 27.0 |
| Tyrol | 1,973 | 4,871 | + 2,898 | + 147 | 5.4 | 9.5 | + 4.1 | 26.2 |
| Vorarlberg | 2,310 | 2,801 | + 491 | + 21 | 6.3 | 5.5 | - 0.8 | 24.1 |
| Vienna | 1,796 | 5,279 | + 3,483 | + 194 | 5.0 | 10.3 | + 5.3 | 33.9 |
| Austria | 36,683 | 51,296 | +14,613 | + 40 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - | 26.4 |

Source: Federal Party Central Office and own calculations

These developments had at least three interesting consequences for intra-party relations. First, there was a change in the land groups' relative strength in terms of party membership levels. Upper Austria remained first (24.4%), but the second place is now held by Styria, albeit on the basis of a smaller share of the total party

membership (down from 18.2 to 13.4%). The second strongest land group had been that of Carinthia, which in 1986 boasted some 20.4% of the FPÖ's total membership. By 2000, it had a share of only 10.6%. The greatest relative gain has been on the part of the land groups of Tyrol (5.4 to 9.5%), Vienna (5.0 to 10.3%), but above all on the part of the Lower Austrian party (6.6 to 14.0%). Second, the disparity in the relative size of the land groups has declined further. Since the relative size of the land groups' memberships determines the number of delegates the land group is entitled to at the *Bundesparteitag* (Federal Party Congress), this shift in membership levels has also resulted in an adjustment to the relative intra-party strength of the various land organisations.

Unfortunately, there are only very few data available regarding the social structure of the FPÖ's membership and there are no useful longitudinal data at all. If one examines the material that is available (the latest of which date from October 2000), there are nonetheless a few points one can make.²⁰ First, it is clear that the overwhelming majority of FPÖ party members are male. Accordingly, the proportion of women in the FPÖ's total membership was in October 2000 a mere 26% and in Burgenland and Carinthia merely 20 and 21% respectively (see Table 2). Women are most strongly represented in the urban party organisation of Vienna, but even here, they comprise a mere 34% of the members. Looking at the development of the age structure of the membership since 1986, it is clear that Haider's assumption of the party leadership resulted in a rejuvenation of the party. This occurred above all in those land groups where the party's membership levels increased most. For example, in 1992 the age cohort of those under 30 comprised some 27% in Burgenland and 22% in Tyrol. In 1994, this age cohort made up 13% of the FPÖ's total membership, but has since declined somewhat and in October 2000 was a mere 11%. During the same period the proportion of those over 60 has remained constant at about a quarter (1995: 25%; 2000: 24%). One possible interpretation of these data is that the phase of strong membership recruitment amongst young Austrians is now over. There is unfortunately only an incomplete set of data regarding the occupational structure of the FPÖ's membership, but if one compares what we know on the basis of those data about the occupational profile of the party's membership in 1992 with what most people believe the situation to have been between the 60s and early 80s (albeit on the basis of no hard data) there do appear to have been some significant changes. In the former period, it was assumed that the party's membership was made up above all by civil servants, self-employed and professionals. In October 2000, however, blue-collar workers comprised approximately a sixth of FPÖ members; self-employed and farmers each made up 11% and students less than 2%. It is worth noting that the occupational structure of the party's membership bears little relation to that of its electorate, in which blue-collar workers are extremely strongly represented (see above).

The size and composition of the FPÖ's membership may well be significant for the party's strategy. On the one hand, maintaining a large membership can be costly for a party. It requires the investment of a considerable amount of financial, organisational and other resources. It may also be costly for the party's leadership by virtue of the fact that it can result in an undesirable narrowing of the latter's room for political manoeuvre, especially in respect of the party's selection policy preferences.

²⁰ The source of the latest data are documents provided to the author on 12 October 2000 by the FPÖ *Bundesparteizentrale* (Central Party Office). The remaining data derive from party-internal documents provided to the author during the course of recent years by party staff and office holders.

On the other hand, it may offer the party and/or its leadership considerable advantages. For one, a large membership is of considerable symbolic value, not least since it enables the party to make a credible claim to represent a large proportion of the citizenry. Second, a densely organised party is simply more visible in society, which in turn militates in favour of the party's mobilisational and legitimational capacity. The membership can also be of considerable material advantage for the party (leadership). Despite the fact that political communication is nowadays conducted above all via electronic media, political parties still rely upon members when it comes to electoral campaigning. The more members a party has, the greater is the resource of unpaid labour at the party's disposal. In addition, notwithstanding the fact that membership contributions are a much less significant source of political parties' overall revenue than used to be the case (Katz & Mair 1992, 1994), membership dues still constitute an important source of party income. When calculating the costs and benefits of a large membership base for a political party and its leadership, however, the most important consideration may well be the extent to which the membership provides a key reservoir for elite recruitment. It is extremely important for the maintenance and external political success of any political party – and especially for one like the FPÖ that is a fledgling governmental party – that it has at its disposal a significantly large reservoir from which it can recruit party functionaries and office holders.

3.2 Party in Public Office

The electoral successes which the FPÖ experienced during the period of populist protest resulted in a massive increase in the number of public offices to which it was entitled. Thus between 1981 and 1999, for example, the party experienced a fourfold increase in the number of elected offices it held. At the communal level, the number of FPÖ councillors grew from 1,766 to 4,876 ; its deputy mayors rose from 46 to 127 and the 27 mayors it had in 1981 had by 1999 become 36. At the *Land* (provincial) level the number of FPÖ *Landtagsabgeordnete* (provincial parliamentarians) grew from 25 to 101, whilst the number of *Landesräte* (members of the provincial government) increased from 4 to 12. Nationally, the FPÖ's caucus in the popularly elected lower chamber (*Nationalrat*) grew from 11 to 52, whilst its caucus in the indirectly elected territorial chamber (*Bundesrat*) now comprises 15, but in 1981 the party had no members at all. Between 1989 and 1991 and again since 1999, the party's leader, Jörg Haider, held the Governorship (*Landeshauptmann*) of Carinthia. If one were also to include all the positions which the FPÖ holds in the various neo-corporatist organisations such as the Chamber of Labour and the Chamber of Commerce, the total number of FPÖ office holders would be approximately 8,000. This has had important internal consequences for the party, has posed new challenges to the party and its leadership and has to some extent also required a strategic re-orientation of the party.

First, there has been an intra-party shift of power away from the party on the ground towards the party in public office. This has resulted in part from existing provisions in the party's statute, according to which holders of public office are ex-officio full members of the most important party committees. Also important have been strategic decisions made by the party leadership in the mid-1990s when it was decided that the intra-party weight of the parliamentary caucus should be increased, in particular as regards the development and determination of the party's policies and goals.

Second, it became increasingly difficult for the party to find people willing to stand on the party's electoral list and to hold public office in its name. The immediate, but not well thought through response by the party at all levels was bring on board virtually anyone willing to stand for election. However, this soon changed the quantitative problem of political recruitment into an at times highly embarrassing qualitative problem. For many of these new candidates all too soon turned out to be people whose background, political opinions, or public behaviour were such that the FPÖ often felt obliged to distance itself from them, or even to remove them from office. The party introduced a series of measures that were designed to address this problem of unsuitable candidates, but also to effect a general strengthening of the party leadership. For example, all potential FPÖ candidates for public office now have to undergo a screening process and decisions regarding the ordering of candidates on party electoral lists have been considerably centralised.

Third, there has been an increased tendency for the party leadership to place at or near the top of its electoral lists (especially at general elections) high-profile public figures who are selected above all because they incorporate certain key issues which the party wishes to emphasise in that specific campaign, or because they are felt by the leadership to be likely to attract a specific segment of the electorate which the party is targeting. Those *Quereinsteiger* - i.e. non-party personalities 'parachuted in' – have typically been used to highlight issues such as the fight against political corruption, or against crime. The system has also led to a prominent role for female *Quereinsteiger* whose visibility would, the party leadership hoped, help address its electoral deficit amongst female voters.²¹ Such practices created not inconsiderable internal party dissatisfaction. The latter was to be found above all amongst long-standing party functionaries; who had little sympathy for a strategy which involved giving secure positions on party electoral lists to newcomers who – unlike them – had not made any significant contribution to the party's success. This dissatisfaction was also located amongst those 'believers' (Panebianco, 1988) who feared that the entry of these 'outsiders' would result in a highly undesirable de-ideologisation of the party.

3.3 Party Central Office

In reality, Katz and Mair's three 'faces' of political parties obviously overlap and thus some aspects of the recent development of the FPÖ party central office have already been alluded to. Therefore, this section will be confine itself to summarising these developments and the strategic challenges they pose for the party. First, the material resources of the FPÖ have increased considerably since 1986, above all because the party's electoral successes have resulted in the FPÖ being entitled to a much larger share of Austria's very generous level of public funding. This has permitted the party to strengthen and increase the staffing resources of the party central office. Second, between 1986 and 1999 there has been an marked improvement in the technical resources of the party central office. For example, the party has at last been

²¹ This symbolic prioritisation of female candidates occurred above all at the national and provincial levels and led to a modest increase in the proportion of female FPÖ office holders. In 1999, for example, women comprised 19.6% of office holders at provincial and national level. It must be noted, however, that this figure was still lower than the already low proportion of women in the FPÖ membership as a whole (2000: 26.4%, see above and table 1). At communal level, women made up merely 13.3% of FPÖ office holders.

able to establish a central index of all party members, something which its leaderships had been seeking for some 30 years to establish. The central office has also been equipped with the latest electronic communication equipment, by virtue of which there has been a considerable speeding up of internal and external communication, as well as a marked improvement in the flow of intra-party information. Also worth mentioning in this context is the fact that the central party office has in recent years increasingly sought the support of professional political experts, who have been employed above all in the training of party functionaries, but also in respect of the planning and conduct of election campaigns. As these people are often employed on a short-term or contract-specific basis, they do not constitute an intra-party factor that might wish (let alone be able) to form an intra-party oppositional group. On the contrary, their dependence upon the party leadership strengthens the position of the latter vis-à-vis the party on the ground. Bearing in mind these changes in above all the party central office and its relationship to the party on the ground one is tempted to conclude that during its period of populist protest the FPÖ has moved a considerable way towards Panebianco's organisational ideal-type of the 'electoral-professional party' (1988, 21 ff.).

Third, there has since February 2000 been a certain disorientation within the party central office. This was in part a consequence of the challenges posed by the physical and psychological changes resulting from the FPÖ's transition from an oppositional party to a party of government. It was, however, also related to the fact that, notwithstanding the above mentioned increases since 1986 in the central office's staffing levels, the party apparatus remains relatively small. In the spring of 2000, many of those staff members and functionaries deemed most competent were either required to work in support of the party's governmental team, or were indeed physically relocated from their positions in the party central office to work in the cabinets of the FPÖ's federal ministers. As a consequence, the efficiency and political competence of the party central office has been undermined. From the perspective of the party's new strategy of governmental responsibility, the functional reorientation and relocation of these former central office staff appears eminently logical. Bearing in mind party-internal considerations, however, this development might be considered to constitute a plundering of the personnel resources of the party central office, which in turn places the party in a position where it urgently needs to replace these people, who were disproportionately well informed about the internal processes of the party. An even important strategic issue for the party relates to the extent to which the party central office will be able to rise to the challenges posed for it by the party's entry into government and the concomitant increase in the tasks demanded of the party central office. That this transition may prove extremely difficult for the FPÖ's modest party apparatus was demonstrated during the short period of government participation which the party experienced between 1983 and 1987 under the leadership of Norbert Steger. It is clear that during this first period of FPÖ government participation the party central office was clearly unable to cope with the simultaneous demands of supporting the FPÖ's government team and ensuring the party's smooth internal operation. It proved incapable on the one hand of conveying to the party on the ground and to the general public the alleged successes of the FPÖ ministers,²² and on the other of maintaining the internal workings of the FPÖ in a manner consistent with the goals of the party leadership. One of the most significant consequences of the overload which the party central office experienced

²² This may of course have been related at least in part to the limited extent of these successes. On the problems of the Steger era see Luther (1991 and 1995a).

between 1983 and 1987 was the fact that the leadership lost control of the party. Haider mobilised the party on the ground against the leadership and was himself elected leader in September 1986.

A fourth important strategic consideration, and one closely related to the previous point, is the extent to which the party leadership will succeed in maintaining the degree of intra-party consensus necessary to ensure the party is able to function externally as an effective political actor. Observers of the FPÖ during its period of populist protest often commented that its internal decision-making processes were highly centralised, or even authoritarian. Though there is some substance to such assertions, they have often been exaggerated. Moreover, the FPÖ has since its foundation always been characterised by strong internal conflicts, which derive from personal, territorial and ideological tensions, but are of course also the product of considerations predicated upon the pursuit of power politics (Luther 1997). During the period of populist protest, the FPÖ leadership was able to manage these conflicts, even if this at times required the implementation of exceptionally tough measures, an example of which was the temporary removal from office of all party functionaries in the Salzburg land party group. A key factor explaining the leadership success is to be found in the fact that its strategy of vote maximisation led to continuous electoral successes and thus to an increase in material resources such as money, public office and other posts. These were available to the party leadership in the form of selective benefits by means of which the leadership was able to placate potential intra-party critics.²³ If the period of governmental responsibility were to result in the predicted reversal of the party's electoral fortunes, the party leadership is likely to have at its disposal such selective incentives and this may in turn lead to a revitalisation of the FPÖ's traditionally very strong intra-party conflicts.

In assuming governmental responsibility on 4 February 2000, the FPÖ has prioritised government over vote maximisation. This implies that the hitherto very close relationship between the party leadership (i.e. Haider) and the party on the ground will come under increasing pressure. For if Panebianco (1988, 21ff.) is correct the party on the ground is likely to have a disproportionately high concentration of 'believers', i.e. of party members whose motivation is predominantly ideological. Alternatively, it is to be expected that the party leadership – amongst whom there is a disproportionately high percentage of persons in public office – will comprise above all 'careerists' whose political priorities are above all related to the achievement, maintenance and exercise of political power. The hard political decisions and compromises that are an inevitable feature of government responsibility will most probably be unwelcome to the party on the ground and to the FPÖ's provincial functionaries. Given that the selective incentives available to the leadership to ensure the compliance of the party on the ground may well decline, increased intra-party conflict seems to be very likely.

Moreover, there will probably be a reactivation of the long-standing territorial conflict within the party, albeit a result of a logic that reverses that which applied during the FPÖ's period of populist protest. During the latter period, the FPÖ was able to achieve at least one governmental seat in every single *Land* government and in Carinthia it even won the governorship. At the federal level, however, the party was

²³ According to Panebianco (1988) the distribution of intra-party resources constitutes one of the 'zones of uncertainty' which the 'dominant coalition' of a party needs to control in order to assert its dominance within the party.

unencumbered by governmental responsibility and pursued its strategy of vote maximisation by means of a populist style that utilised unbridled political rhetoric. The latter proved electorally successful, but did cause political discomfort to some *Land* party groups. This was particularly the case with the Vorarlberg group. Unlike that of most Austrian *Länder*, Vorarlberg's constitution does not require all parties that receive more than a given percentage of the popular vote at *Landtag* elections automatically to be represented in the provincial government. On the one hand, this was an advantage for the local FPÖ, inasmuch as it meant that they were members of a genuine – as opposed to an obligatory – government coalition. On the other hand, whilst most of the FPÖ's other provincial ministers could not easily be removed from office, the FPÖ's membership of the Vorarlberg government was not guaranteed and could be terminated by its dominant coalition partner (the ÖVP). The all too frequent occasions on which the party leader made a what might somewhat euphemistically be referred to as verbal '*faux pas*'²⁴ thus placed the Vorarlberg *Land* group in a very difficult position.

Now the position is reversed. The federal party now carries governmental responsibility, whilst in all *Länder* other than Vorarlberg the party is at best a member of an obligatory coalition, but has elsewhere lost its governmental seat either as a result of electoral decline (e.g. Burgenland), or because the constitutional rules have been changed to eject them from *Land* government (e.g. Salzburg and Tyrol). The FPÖ thus faces a situation that might well be analogous to that of 1983-1986, when the federal party was blamed by the more ideologically motivated 'believers' of the provincial 'party on the ground party' for the failings of an unpopular government.

In sum, it can be said that the FPÖ's assumption of governmental responsibility implies numerous strategic challenges in respect of organisation and elite recruitment. Moreover, these apply to all three 'faces' of the party. It is to be expected that intra-party tensions will rise, whilst the resources available to the party leadership in its attempts to overcome these tensions will decline. It is too early to say whether the party leadership will be able to square these circles. However, it is very likely that intra-party life will become more demanding for the leadership, which in turn will make it more difficult for the party's internal homogeneity to be maintained at a level sufficient to ensure that the FPÖ will be able to function as a united actor externally.

4. Concluding Comments

Pelinka (2001, esp. 57f.) acknowledges the existence of some similarities between the policy positions of the FPÖ and of other European parties, specifically in respect of the FPÖ's anti-EU line. However, he insists that – compared to other European parties – the FPÖ really is an exception case (a *Sonderfall*). For Pelinka, the singularity (*Besonderheit*) of the FPÖ results above all from its historical roots in the German-national *Lager*, its relationship to the Nazi regime in Austria and the biography of its first chairman (a titular SS general). This may well be the case. Moreover, the electoral successes of the often unbridled populist protest employed by the FPÖ between 1986 and 1999 as a means of vote maximisation have not yet been matched elsewhere in Europe. Indeed, the verbally aggressive manner in which

²⁴ Including, for example, his reference to the 'orderly employment policy' of the Third Reich, or his speech to an audience containing former members of the *Waffen SS*. (Luther 1995c).

the FPÖ conducted itself was also one of the main reasons for the sanctions imposed by the EU-14, which justified them by asserting that the entry of a right-wing populist party into Austria's government posed a unique development in European politics and one that threatened European democracy. This would not only permit but obligate the other EU member states to ensure Austria's isolation in the community.

On the other hand, there are other respects in which the FPÖ might be considered to be markedly unexceptional. Above all, it is, as has been argued in this paper, unable to avoid the party-strategic challenges brought about as a result of its assumption of governmental responsibility. Like all other parties that undergo this transition, it too is faced with the need to make 'hard choices' between policy, office or votes (Müller and Strøm 1999). Indeed, this transition is likely to prove especially difficult for a party such as the FPÖ which for so many years and so successfully pursued a strategy of populist agitation.

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