

AUSTRIA

(October 1918-March 1919)

Transition from Empire to Republic

BY

DAVID F. STRONG, A. M.

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE
FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IN reviewing the years since the close of the World War, it is significant that Austria was more consistently in the news and of more constant concern to diplomats than any of the other smaller states of Europe. The reasons for this are to be found both in the history of its imperial past and in the new situation in which Austria found itself, in the post-war years, as a Republic of some six and a half million people.

The problem which was post-war Austria can be traced to the manner in which this small country came into existence in 1918. Difficulties of a geographical, economic, and religious nature appeared to hamper the efforts of the administrative leaders of the first government. Under conditions which prevailed at the time, definite, and what might have had to be drastic, solutions were postponed, and this postponement led inevitably to a weakened state. The many books about post-war Austria which have been run off both the German and English presses seem to neglect entirely, or pass over in a few pages, those important first months of adjustment and attempted reconstruction—October, 1918, to March, 1919—which historically are the key to the events that followed.

Any attempt to arrive at an understanding of the situation as it then existed is made difficult by the lack of reliable documentary material, for the few weeks following the issuance of the Imperial Manifesto of October 16 witnessed chaotic conditions within the country. Communications were down, and while the Central Government in Vienna was struggling to inaugurate a new era, it was largely uninformed as to the true situation beyond the city limits. In addition to the political confusion, another element complicates the problem of arriving at the truth, and that is the extraordinary extent to which the people of German-Austria were divided along lines dictated by class, religion, or political affiliation. Thus, before accepting the opinion of any writer, or before attending too scrupulously to the re-

marks of any deputy in Parliament, it is necessary to ascertain to what political faith he adhered, and also whether he was Jew or Gentile.

In view of the exceptional bias common to nearly all those whose writings or speeches are now available to the historian, a serious problem is presented in the mere matter of finding out what a situation was and who was responsible for it at any given time during the transitional period from Empire to Republic. When the evidence is so largely stated in extreme terms of partisan attitudes, it is not easy to arrive at a well-balanced judgment of events as they really took place. Nevertheless, this aim has been constantly kept in mind in the pages which follow.

The material for this work was taken in the first instance from the Viennese newspapers, verified wherever possible by parliamentary records, government reports, or other official publications. In these, the most extreme viewpoints were represented by the daily newspapers. On the one hand, there was the clerical *Reichspost*, conservative, and in this period, monarchical at heart. On the other hand, there was the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, official organ of the Social Democratic Party. Fluctuating between these two was the *Neue Freie Presse*, a liberal paper with reasonably good news service but editorially disinclined to array itself on either side of a controversial subject.

A more reliable analysis of the changing scene was offered by the economic periodical, *Der oesterreichische Volkswirt*, which, while opposed to many of the doctrines prevailing at the time, was nevertheless reasonable in its opposition. And from the cultural viewpoint, the *Oesterreichische Rundschau* offered helpful comments to the historian.

Another valuable source, in view of the fact that the Vienna archives are closed, were the stenographic reports of the sessions of Parliament, with the laws, written interpellations and replies. The reports of the sittings proved of great value for at times it was only from the remarks of parliamentary leaders that information could be gained regarding the actual success achieved in the various departments of state. This was particularly true of the Foreign Office.

In reconstructing the background, historical and economic, of the war years in which many of the post-war problems germinated, the volumes on the *Economic and Social History of the World War*, prepared under the supervision of the Division of Economics and History of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, were of great assistance because of their detailed and documentary treatment of such important subjects as food, economic production, communications, and social conditions. Many of the authors of these works were in charge of the various activities of which they wrote and had access to documents and statistical materials which may never again be available. These volumes have been largely used in the following pages in matters relating to the war period. No attempt has been made to write a history of Austria during the War or to consider in detail the many phases of the collapse. These developments, economic, military, and diplomatic have all been treated elsewhere by competent authorities. The special scope and purpose of this work is to present as clearly as possible the period that began with the negotiations for concluding peace and ended in March 1919, a period brief but important.

The most reliable and impartial documents and first-hand records of these crucial days under the Provisional National Government of German-Austria were found in the Hoover War Library of Stanford University, where in addition to the complete files of the American Relief Administration personnel are many pertinent letters and reports by disinterested observers who were considering not only the situation in German-Austria during the winter of 1918-1919, but its relation to the Central European problem as a whole.

The social and economic history of what remained to Austria after the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy is a tragic story and one of lasting human interest. The glimpses of the Vienna and the Austria of the fateful autumn of 1918 and the winter of 1919 which are offered here are drawn from such contemporary sources as have been available. Yet this work cannot be considered as an exhaustive study, for the field is both rich in

content and far-reaching in its implications for the history of Europe.

The author wishes to express thanks to Professor James T. Shotwell of Columbia University for his helpful and friendly criticism throughout all stages in the preparation of the manuscript; to Professors Geroid T. Robinson and John H. Wuorinen of Columbia University for suggestions in clarifying presentation and style; to visiting-Professor Thomas H. Thomas of Yale University for reading the entire manuscript and particularly for a criticism of the Armistice Period; to Professor Walter C. Langsam of Union College and Professor Erna Patzelt, recently of the University of Vienna, for suggestions based upon their intimate knowledge of Austria.

Appreciation is also expressed to Professor Ralph H. Lutz of Stanford University for permission to use the Hoover War Library, and to the library staff for their valuable assistance in assembling unpublished materials bearing on post-war Austria.

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