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# THE PROBLEM OF AUSTRIA

By E. J. PASSANT



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PAMPHLETS  
WORLD AFFAIRS



THE DIVISION OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY AFTER THE WAR OF 1914-18

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On 1 November 1943 the Foreign Ministers of Russia, the U.S.A., and Great Britain declared from Moscow that 'Austria, the first free country to fall a victim to Nazi aggression, shall be liberated'. But liberation, by itself, is not enough. The future of Austria rests on the successful solution of three major problems; the relation of the Austrians to the Germans; the internal divisions amongst the Austrians themselves; and the capacity of the country to maintain a satisfactory economic life. These problems cannot be understood, much less solved, except with some knowledge of the historical background. Before approaching them, therefore, Mr. Passant describes the nature of the Habsburg Dual Monarchy which broke up in 1918, and the origin and brief history of the ill-fated Republic of Austria from 1919 to 1938. Mr. Passant concludes that, whatever the results (as yet imperfectly known to us) of seven years of Nazification may have been, the problems that the pre-war Republic failed to solve will still remain. Their successful solution will only be possible in a new Europe in which intense nationalism is superseded by international co-operation.

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## THE PROBLEM OF AUSTRIA

A State can only be stable and healthy if its people desire to be independent of their neighbours, are sufficiently united in their loyalty to the central authority to make its political system workable, and are able to maintain by their economic activity a standard of living acceptable to themselves. The republic of Austria, during its short life of twenty years (1918-38) could not be said with confidence to fulfil any of these three conditions. The desire for union (*Anschluss*) with the German Reich, whose speech and culture they shared, though it varied in strength amongst different sections of Austrians at different times, was strong enough to lead an Austrian professor to describe the republic as 'a State with a strong tendency to non-existence'. Internal political divisions were so deep that they led to the forcible suppression of the Socialist Party by Dollfuss (February 1934), to the establishment of a Catholic-Fascist dictatorship and to the murder of Dollfuss himself by the Austrian Nazis (25 July 1934). And, in the economic sphere, the little country began its history by plunging into an inflation, which ruined many of its citizens; it had to appeal on two occasions (1922, 1931) to the League of Nations for loans to stave off financial collapse; and, right up to its forcible absorption in Hitler's Great Germany, it was never able to find employment for a considerable section of its citizens. Although, therefore, the Foreign Ministers of Russia, the United States, and Great Britain declared from Moscow, on 1 November 1943, that 'Austria, the first free country to fall a victim to Nazi aggression, shall be liberated' it is evident that liberation, by itself, is not enough. That the Foreign Ministers of the three Powers were aware of this is shown by the fact that they go on to speak of the problems of political and economic security, with which Austria and the neighbouring States will be faced. But it is clear that, in the case of Austria, the three problems of the relation of the German-Austrians to the Germans, of the internal divisions amongst the Austrians themselves, and of the capacity of the country to maintain a satisfactory economic life—to prove itself, in the German phrase, *lebensfähig*, i.e. able to live—will remain to be solved. All three problems are closely connected with each other, but

before considering what solutions of them may be practicable in the post-war world, whose very outlines are still dim, it is necessary to examine briefly the historical background in which they developed.

### Origins of the Habsburg Monarchy

The Austrian Republic was formed out of the German-speaking provinces of the old multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire, which collapsed in defeat in 1918. After the claims of all the non-German and non-Magyar peoples of that empire—Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Serbs, Croats, Rumanians, Italians, Poles—to national independence, or to incorporation in their existing national States, had been satisfied 'le reste', said Clemenceau at the Peace Conference, 'c'est l'Autriche.' But it is still of importance that the inhabitants of this remainder of the old Austria grew to maturity, and formed their political and social opinions, as members of one of the dominant peoples in a great empire. For it should be remembered that every Austrian of the age of 45 or over to-day (1945) spent at least the first sixteen formative years of his life under the rule of Franz Josef, who died in 1916, and that Franz Josef came to the throne in 1848.

The Habsburg monarchy had been built up on the basis of the duchies of Austria and Styria granted by Rudolf of Habsburg, Holy Roman Emperor and King of the German Reich, to his sons in 1282. Originally created in the ninth and tenth centuries as offensive-defensive frontier outposts of the Holy Roman Empire these Germanic *Länder* had had a long history under their dukes of the House of Babenberg before they passed under Habsburg rule. During the fourteenth century the Habsburgs added to them the adjacent duchies of Carinthia and Carniola, and the Margravate of Tyrol. But in each of these *Länder*<sup>1</sup> the Habsburgs ruled as archduke, duke, or margrave, and their peoples have retained a strong sense of their inherent rights and of their separate identities throughout their history. Their local assemblies (diets), which were retained in a modernised form both after the constitutional changes of

<sup>1</sup> There is no satisfactory English equivalent of the German word *Land* (plural=*Länder*). It has, for an Austrian, an emotional content comparable to that of 'Canton' for a Swiss.

1867 and under the republican constitution, served to keep alive their sense of independence. Regarded as a whole the *Länder* formed a distinct administrative unit within the Habsburg system. They were the historic 'Austria' before the larger extensions of Habsburg power had occurred.

It was the acceptance by Ferdinand of Habsburg in 1526 of the crowns of Bohemia and Hungary after his brother-in-law Louis, king of both countries, had been slain by the Turks at Mohács, which established the Habsburgs as the leading Power of Central Europe until the nineteenth century. The fortunes of the two kingdoms under Habsburg rule were, however, strikingly dissimilar. Bohemia sought to substitute a Protestant king for its Habsburg ruler in 1621, but was reduced by force of arms, its elective kingship declared hereditary in the House of Habsburg, and a large measure of Germanization imposed by the confiscation of the lands of its nobles. Though it retained some traces of its old autonomy 'the Lands of the Crown of St. Wenceslas' henceforward became, for administrative purposes, hardly more than an extension of Austria.

Hungary had a very different history. It was under Turkish rule until the end of the seventeenth century (Peace of Carlowitz, 1699) but, though attempts were later made by its Habsburg rulers to rob it of its historic institutions of self-government, the Magyar nobility defended their ancient constitution with great tenacity and ultimately won their battle.

### The Dual Monarchy

The political character of the modern Austro-Hungarian Empire was in fact set by the arrangements made in 1867 after the defeat of Austria at the hands of Prussia. A bargain was then struck by Franz Josef and his advisers with the Hungarians (Magyars), which became known as the *Ausgleich*, and which involved the final abandonment of the policy, initiated by Josef II (1765-90) and half-heartedly pursued by some of his successors, of integrating, by a unified centralized German-speaking administration, the whole of the lands over which the dynasty ruled. From 1867 onwards, the Habsburg Empire became the Dual Monarchy, and Hungary, 'the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen', recovered a large measure of autonomy. Within its boundaries Franz Josef ruled as Hungarian king,

limited by the powers of the Hungarian Parliament. Since that Parliament was controlled by the Magyar landowners,<sup>1</sup> the *Ausgleich* ensured the political dominance of the Magyars over the Slav and Rumanian peoples within the kingdom. Despite a certain degree of autonomy in Croatia-Slavonia, the Magyars had secured for themselves, and retained until 1918, the position of a ruling nation. The Serbs of their southern borders, the Rumanians of Transylvania, the Slovaks and Ruthenians of northern Hungary were regarded, and treated, as subject peoples by the Magyars, who formed not quite half (10 million out of 20·8 million) of the population of Greater Hungary, including Croatia and Slavonia, in 1910.

The other main portion of the empire after 1867 was Austria or, more accurately, 'the kingdoms and provinces represented in the Parliament (Reichsrat)'. The territorial units of which it was composed stretched in a great arc round Hungary. From Cattaro, on the Adriatic, the thin belt of Dalmatia and its islands, mainly inhabited by Slavs, ran north to Fiume, the Hungarian port interrupting the line of Austrian territory; thence Istria, with the naval base of Pola and the commercial port of Trieste, had a mixed population of Slavs and Italians; farther north the Alpine provinces and Upper and Lower Austria were overwhelmingly German; but in Bohemia and Moravia, though there was a strong German minority, there were twice as many Czechs, whilst in the provinces of Silesia, Galicia, and the Bukovina, Czechs, Poles, and Ukrainians formed the bulk of the population. Indeed, taking this 'Austria' as a whole, the German-speaking population (9·9 million) was heavily outnumbered by non-Germans (18·0 million). (See Map inside front of cover.)

Within this great aggregation of territories the German-speaking Austrians were the dominant people,<sup>2</sup> though not nearly so completely dominant as the Magyars were in Hungary. The language of the dynasty and court was German;

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<sup>1</sup> The mass of Magyar peasantry was without political influence and Magyar 'Liberalism' and 'Constitutionalism' was limited to the rights of the upper landowning class.

<sup>2</sup> Galicia is the one exception. Here the Poles were the dominant people and their representatives in the Austrian Parliament were, for this reason, a Government Party.

the higher posts in the Army, Navy, and Civil Service were occupied by men who were either German-Austrian by birth or, at least, could speak German, which was the language of the higher levels of administration; Vienna, the capital city, was predominantly German in speech. Yet the numerical superiority of the non-German peoples in the Austrian half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire prevented the establishment of a German-Austrian hegemony at all comparable to that exercised by the Magyars in Hungary and had other consequences which profoundly affected the outlook of the German-Austrians of the future Austrian Republic.

In the first place the Emperor Franz Josef perceived that it was impossible to govern his Austrian dominions along German nationalist lines, especially in an increasingly democratic age. Metternich had once denounced what later generations learned to call the principle of national self-determination as 'an infamous policy' and, to Franz Josef as to Metternich, the development of separatist nationalism spelt the danger that multi-national Austria would break into pieces. From this point of view, German-Austrian nationalism, when the emphasis was on German, was hardly less dangerous than that of any other of the Austrian peoples. Franz Josef's policy, therefore, was to preserve the unity of his State by focussing the loyalty of all his subjects of every nationality upon himself as their ruler and representative. From the height of the throne his vision of the ideal Austria was one inhabited by many peoples all equally *Kaisertreu* (loyal to Emperor and Empire). In that perspective the German-Austrians were but one national group, even if one of the two most favoured, amongst many.

### Austrian Politics before 1918

Even in an age of increasingly intense nationalism the majority of Franz Josef's German-Austrian subjects understood and accepted their ruler's attitude. The influence of the Catholic Church supported imperial policy and the great advantages accruing from the maintenance of Austrian political unity, even at the cost of distasteful concessions to the Slav races, were powerful arguments on the Emperor's side. Of the three major political parties of German-Austrians before 1918 the two largest—the Christian-Social and the Social-Democrat

parties— accepted this point of view. But it was significant of future political developments that, in 1882, a German-Nationalist party was formed which developed a violent and radical Pan-German wing under Georg von Schoenerer, who openly professed his loyalty to the Hohenzollern Emperor in Berlin, as opposed to the Habsburg Emperor in Vienna. Schoenerer initiated a 'Los von Rom' (Away from Rome) movement in order to facilitate the union of German-Austrians with the Protestants of Prussia; preached an extreme form of Pan-Germanism and anti-Semitism; and led his followers in rowdy brawls, both inside and outside the Austrian Parliament, against their opponents. It is true that, after 1900, Schoenerer's agitation lost ground and died away. But it was significant for the future that it found ardent supporters in those areas of Austria where German-Austrians were most directly threatened by the Slavs—in the German-speaking fringe of Bohemia and Moravia, in Styria and Carniola. Schoenerer's movement, to which Hitler has paid his tribute in *Mein Kampf*, revealed by its tone and temper what might be the attitude of at least a minority of German-Austrians if once Austria should break up into separate States along nationalist lines and if, as a result of such a break up, the age long struggle between Teuton and Slav should take on a more naked form.

A second consequence of the multi-national character of Austria before 1914 was that it prevented the development of a parliamentary system on western lines. The cleavages between the national groups, themselves sub-divided into parties, were too deep to permit of the solution of many of the questions of the monarchy by public debate. And the existence of some twenty-six parties rendered the emergence of stable majorities, which alone can make ministerial responsibility a reality, practically impossible. The Ministers remained, therefore, nominees of the Emperor and were, for the most part, permanent officials; parliament had often to be suspended because of the violence and obstruction of the members; and government had to be carried on by decree under an emergency provision of the constitution, whose interpretation was stretched for this purpose far beyond the obvious limits of its meaning.

Two results of major importance flowed from this situation. When the old Austria broke up in 1918 and adopted parlia-

mentary democracy as the Republic's political system none of the party leaders had had any actual experience of executive government themselves, nor had either they, or their followers, learnt the arts of compromise and co-operation without which parliamentary democracy cannot even work in a multi-party system. Above all, neither party leaders, representatives, nor voters had learnt to feel any genuine and ultimate responsibility for the conduct of their State.

A second result was that, in the absence of an effective parliament, the task of government in modern Austria necessarily fell to the professional Civil Service (*Berufsbeamtentum*). From 1740 onwards it had steadily increased in importance as the backbone of the administration of the State as a whole as well as of both the western Germanic *Länder* and of the more recently acquired provinces. In its upper levels it was staffed by a highly educated, competent, and honest body of public servants, upon whom rested the burden of government, not merely that of administration. It preserved within its ranks much of the liberal-rationalist spirit of the Age of Enlightenment and both initiated and carried through most of the major political developments within the Habsburg monarchy. It was a factor of major importance in the whole political and social structure of the State, and its importance did not cease in 1918.

### Austrian Culture

One other aspect of the multi-national character of the old Austria must be discussed for it raises the important question whether there was and is an Austrian or German-Austrian<sup>1</sup> culture distinct from that of the German Reich and the further question of the attitude of German-Austrians to Reich Germans and to the whole problem of German nationalism.

It is impossible here to attempt an adequate analysis of the subtle and complicated problem of the relation between German and German-Austrian culture as a whole. The common elements in speech, in literature and the arts are obvious. Goethe and Schiller, Bach and Beethoven were certainly no less influential and no less honoured in Vienna than in Munich or Berlin. But it is also clear that the differences between the

<sup>1</sup> The phrase German-Austrians is used throughout to denote Austrians who felt themselves most at home in the German tongue. No 'racial' distinction, based on blood, is intended.

historical experience of the German-Austrians and those of their northern neighbours had produced differences in their respective scales of values. For centuries Austria had developed politically, economically, and territorially away from northern Germany and Vienna had, throughout its history, but much more definitely since the sixteenth century, become the main centre of social and economic, as well as of governmental, activity in the great area of central and south-eastern Europe comprised within the boundaries of the Habsburg monarchy. Not only had the Habsburgs brought it into close connexion with Spain and Italy, especially from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, but it had increasingly become, in the nineteenth century, the meeting ground, and in some degree the 'melting pot', of all the peoples of the Monarchy. It was continually absorbing new elements into its German-Austrian cultural community and, in that process, the content of that culture could not remain wholly static. Not least important was the fact that the Jews of the Monarchy, especially from Galicia, were constantly being absorbed. Men of Jewish race, gifted not only in the art of money-making but also in the arts and sciences, attained a position of great importance, especially in Vienna and Budapest. They controlled most of the press and much of the industry and finance of the Empire and, on the other side of the political fence, provided the chief leaders of Austrian Social Democracy.

The past history of Austria, the tendency towards expansion south-eastwards, the constant assimilative process, could not but distinguish Viennese culture from that of the Reich Germans. Equally it differentiated Vienna and the educated Viennese from the much more Germanic, conservative, and Catholic peasantry of the Alpine *Länder*, so that it is difficult to speak of German-Austrian culture as a single whole. But there is one sphere, the political, in which the difference of attitude between Germans of the Reich and German-Austrians is more clearly defined and it has immediate relevance to the future of Austria. Perhaps the most important single fact about the recent culture of the German Reich is that, since Bismarck's victories, and especially since the creation of the German Empire in 1871, the view of the State as Power (*Macht*), with all its far-reaching implications in every department of life and

thought, has increasingly dominated the German mind. Right has given place to Might in the German scale of values. That philosophy of Power has never been accepted by any but a minority of Austrians. As Catholics, whose faith puts limits to the claims of any temporal power; as members of a State not conspicuously successful in the art of war; as a German-Austrian minority in a multi-national community, in which a naked trial of strength with the other nationalities might mean their ruin; as a conservative peasantry in the Alpine *Länder*, tenacious of ancient rights against encroachments of the central government; as tolerant, even sceptical citizens of Vienna, liberal in social outlook, jealous to preserve the rights of the individual—in any of these capacities, or in any combination of them, the German-Austrians were not attracted by the brutal simplicities of modern German political doctrine. Nor were they tempted to conceive of their country as that formidable Colossus, clad in shining armour, which William II delighted to exhibit to an apprehensive world.

More than this Austria had been attacked, robbed, and ultimately displaced from its leadership of the German Reich by these same Prussian worshippers of Power. From 1483 to 1806, the Habsburgs had been continuously elected to the office of German King and Holy Roman Emperor, except for a brief interval in the eighteenth century. And, after 1815, when the German Confederation replaced the Empire, dissolved in 1806, the Habsburgs retained their primacy in Germany as holding the presidency of the new organization. It was Prussia which, by seizing Silesia in the eighteenth century, by extruding Austria from the reorganization of Germany after defeating her in 1866, and by creating the Prusso-German Empire in 1871 had lowered the prestige, lessened the influence, and invaded the historic rights of the Habsburg rulers. Presented in this form the doctrine of Power could not appeal to the Austrians, and Austrian culture, therefore, remained largely unaffected by the cult of the State, which developed in the German Reich.

On the level of popular sentiment the dislike of Prussian arrogance and militarism was exhibited by calling Prussians 'Piefkes' and, even in 1919, an American visitor to Vienna heard children singing, as they danced in the snow :—

## THE PROBLEM OF AUSTRIA

Es gibt nur ein' Kaiser Stadt  
Und das ist Wien.  
Es gibt nur ein' Rauber Stadt  
Und die heisst Berlin.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the significance of this popular resentment at Prussian aggression and of the rejection of Prussian militarism must not be overrated. Both attitudes were already being weakened in Austria even before 1918 by the intensification of German nationalist feeling. So long as the multi-national Austrian State held together and could rely on the diplomatic and military support of the German Reich it was not unnatural for Austrians to revenge themselves in jokes and jeers at Prussian expense for the defeats which Prussia had inflicted on them in the past. It was a family quarrel within *Deutschtum*. But, when the Habsburg Empire was broken into fragments in 1918, when the German-Austrians lost their position as a ruling people within a great empire, when the position of all Germans in Europe was weakened by a catastrophic defeat, the position changed profoundly. The problem of Teuton versus Slav was posed afresh and the German-Austrians were compelled to consider whether they would fare better as members of a German Reich, still great in size and population, or as members of a small German 'Switzerland', politically and economically separate from their fellow-Germans of the north.

### Collapse of the Empire—Foundation of the Republic

The collapse of the Habsburg Empire was delayed until military defeat occurred in November 1918. In addition to military causes the peoples of Austria were war-weary, their food rations inadequate, and they were worked upon by socialist anti-war propaganda from within as well as by Allied promises of self-determination for the national groups from without. As the non-German peoples of the Empire broke, or prepared to break, their bonds of union with it, the German-Austrians were bound to stake out their own claims to a national territory and to their right to determine their future political forms and relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> 'There is only one Imperial City, and that is Vienna. There is only one Robber City, and that is called Berlin.'

On 10 November 1918, the German-speaking members of the former Austrian Parliament (*Reichsrat*) were told by their Socialist colleagues that the proclamation of a democratic republic was necessary to prevent chaos. On 11 November the Emperor Charles renounced all part in the government of Austria and undertook to accept unreservedly the decisions of the Austrian people. On the 12th the same members of the *Reichsrat*, acting as a provisional National Assembly, proclaimed German-Austria a democratic republic based on universal suffrage and proportional representation. They went on to declare that 'German-Austria (*Deutsch-Österreich*) is a constituent part of the German Republic' and, on 22 November, that the frontiers of the new Austrian Republic were to include all the territory of the former Austria inhabited by German-Austrians.

The resolutions of the Austrian Provisional National Assembly had, however, no validity in the eyes of the Allied victors. Before the boundaries of the new State could be defined the claims of all the non-German peoples had to be heard, and it was not until 19 September 1919, that the Treaty of St. Germain fixed the frontiers of the Austrian Republic. They contained much less than the Austrian Assembly had claimed. Southern Tyrol, with its large German-Austrian population, passed to Italy; the northern boundaries of Yugoslavia were so drawn as to include Carniola and parts of Southern Carinthia and Styria within them; and, heaviest loss of all, the German-Austrians of Bohemia and Moravia, over 3 million in number, were included within the Czechoslovak State (see Map inside front of cover). In addition, the *Anschluss* (union) with the German Republic was flatly forbidden, except with the consent of the League of Nations, and the Austrian parliament, under Allied pressure, was compelled to pass a law on 21 October 1919, declaring that 'German-Austria . . . is a democratic Republic under the name Austria'. Thus even the name of the infant Republic was prescribed for it and, at its very birth, it was endowed with two potent grievances in the prohibition of union with the German Reich and in the incorporation of some 4 millions of the German-speaking population of the old Austria into foreign States. Both these grievances were inflicted, as it seemed to the

Austrians, in defiance of that very principle of national self-determination, which their victors proclaimed loudly and applied strictly wherever it worked against the interests of *Deutschtum*.

### The New Republic

The territory left to the new Republic under the terms of the Treaty of St. Germain (see Map inside back of cover) consisted of the almost purely Germanic *Länder* of the old Austria in Vorarlberg, Tyrol, Salzburg, Carinthia, Styria, and Upper and Lower Austria. All these were Alpine *Länder*, for the Alps extend into Upper and Lower Austria, though the valley of the Danube also runs through them. In addition, the Republic was allotted a German-speaking area of western Hungary, known as the Burgenland, but which Hungarian resistance to its cession prevented from becoming effectively part of Austria until 1922. Even then, after a plebiscite had been taken, the largest town Oedenburg (Sopron) was excluded from the territory ceded by Hungary. The total area of the Republic was just under 80,000 square kilometres and its population was less than 6½ million. It was, thus, both in area and population about one-eighth of the old Habsburg Empire, or one-quarter of the former Austria, excluding Hungary. Of the population of the country in 1919 almost 2 million, nearly one-third of the whole, lived in Vienna, and rather more than half were either engaged in agriculture and forestry or lived in towns and villages with a population of less than 2,000.

The break-up of the Habsburg Empire and the appearance of the German-Austrian *Länder* as a separate political unit, side by side with a greatly reduced Hungary and the so-called Succession States (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Rumania), necessarily created a whole series of new problems both in international relations and in the internal affairs of the new Republic, whose inner political and economic life was profoundly affected by its relations with the outside world.

Its geographical position and the nature of its territory gave Austria great strategic importance. It commanded the passes east of Switzerland from Central Europe to Italy and the Adriatic; the Danube flowed through it for over 150 miles and offered the natural passage for a German drive to the south-east,

outflanking Czechoslovakia, or for the entry of hostile forces into southern Germany. According as it rested upon the support of either it could be a northern bastion of Italy against Germany or a southern extension of Germany, providing means of access to the Lombard plain. Any revival of German military power was certain, therefore, to involve the Austrian Republic deeply in the rivalry of its larger neighbours to the north and south, whilst Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were deeply concerned in the maintenance of Austrian separation from Germany as a protection for their own frontiers.

Economically, the Austrian *Länder* were intrinsically of less importance. But they had formed part of a great economic system in south-eastern Europe, of which Vienna had been the financial and directing centre. If the disruption of this system affected the Succession States, which set out to build up their own autonomous national economies, less than it affected Austria, it was nevertheless a disaster for the whole area of the old Habsburg Empire. Its restoration, in some form or another, remained one of the international problems of which Austria was, and is, the centre.

For the internal history of the Republic both its strategic and economic situation proved to be of vital importance. But the reduction of Austria to its Germanic limits, the loss of their imperial status by its citizens, and the disappearance of the Habsburg dynasty itself also had serious consequences. Within the narrower confines of the Republic the long-standing contrast between Vienna and the Alpine *Länder* took on sharper definition and, as will be seen, new forms. The loss of their former predominance in a great area, largely inhabited by Slavs, and their separation from former German-Austrians now included in Czechoslovakia or Italy, sharpened the sense of German nationalism in many Austrians and ultimately led to the revival of Pan-Germanism in a form even more intense than Schoenerer's movement had displayed. The disappearance of the Habsburg monarchy led the German-Austrians, during years of acute political and economic crisis, to attempt to deal both with their domestic and their international difficulties by a democratic party system, with whose methods, as a means of responsible government, they were entirely unfamiliar. Having lost their traditional centre of loyalty to their Kaiser and Arch-

duke, having seen their State reduced to a fraction of its former size, the German-Austrians had to readjust their whole political outlook and to transfer their former sentiments of allegiance from the Habsburg dynasty and the Empire to the elected President and Government of the Republic or to the Republic itself.

### Political System of the Republic

The prestige of the democratic idea, greatly enhanced by the victories of the Allies and by President Wilson's Fourteen Points, backed by the support of the major Austrian parties, ensured the adoption of a democratic system of responsible parliamentary government in the new Republic. But the constitution eventually adopted by the National Assembly was not only democratic, it was also federal. The central legislature consisted of two chambers—a National Parliament (*Nationalrat*) directly elected by the people by a system of proportional representation and a Federal Council (*Bundesrat*) elected by the assemblies, or Diets, of the *Länder*. The autonomous character of the *Länder* was recognized in the constitution and it was provided that all subjects not explicitly placed within the competence of the federal government remained in the sphere of autonomous action of the *Länder*, each of which had its own government (*Landesregierung*) under the President of the *Land* (*Landeshauptman*) responsible to the Diet of the *Land*. On the other hand the sphere of competence of the central federal government was very wide and, under pressure of the financial needs of the State, tended to become wider. And the system of parliamentary government responsible to the majority of the National Parliament, itself directly elected by the whole people, concentrated public attention upon its doings, which were intrinsically more important than those of either the Federal Council or of the local Diets. Although the constitution, therefore, recognized the historic rights of the *Länder* to a considerable measure of autonomy the balance of power in the new republic rested with the central government. That power had to be exercised by the leaders of the three main political parties already in existence in German-Austria, the Christian Social, Social Democrat, and Pan-German parties.

The Christian Social party exercised the most continuous

influence upon the politics of the Austrian Republic. It had been largely created by an extremely able demagogue, with some of the gifts of statesmanship, Karl Lueger, who organized the discontents of the little people of Austria in the 1890's—the small professional men, the shopkeepers, clerks, and independent craftsmen of Vienna, and the peasantry of the Alpine *Länder*. Its programme was directed against Big Business on the one side and Marxist Socialism, represented by the Social Democrats, on the other. It attacked the Jews, who could be found in both these hostile camps and, supported by the lower clergy, it claimed to be the political representative of Catholic Austria against the secularist ideas, whether Pan-German or Marxian, of its political opponents. Under Lueger's leadership it captured Vienna of which Lueger was elected Burgomaster, and was reluctantly accepted as such by Franz Josef, in 1897. The party's growth was greatly assisted by the grant of universal suffrage in 1907 so that, even before 1914, political Catholicism in Austria had produced a democratic, popular party, which was especially *Kaisertreu*, and in that sense especially Austrian, in its rejection of Pan-German ideas in favour of loyalty to the dynasty and to the Austrian state.

The rival of the Christian Social Party in the affections of the masses was the Social Democratic Party. Led by a number of able Jews—Viktor Adler, Otto Bauer, and others—it made great strides in Vienna after Lueger's death, and in some of the other industrial centres. A strong trade union and consumers' co-operative movement was linked with it and, under Adler's skilful leadership, it combined a doctrine of radical socialization of the means of production with a firm adherence to democratic principles and the rule of the majority. Though some of its leaders were derided before 1914 as 'Government' Socialists, because they were willing to support imperial policy when it suited their purpose, the Austrian Social Democrats were, in certain respects, uncompromising in their methods and totalitarian in their aims. As the war went on the radical character of their policy increased and, after the triumph of Bolshevism in Russia, they were faced with the rivalry of organized Communism. Yet, though their demands for socialist reforms became more extreme, the Social Democrats steadily refused to adopt Bolshevik methods or to aim at establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat by force.

The Pan-Germans, or German Nationalists, formed the third major party. Though their numbers were much smaller than those of the other two parties they were often in a position under the parliamentary system to exercise a casting vote. After 1900 their more extreme wing had declined in importance and they had come to represent chiefly the upper bourgeoisie, including many of the higher civil servants and the professions. Strongly conservative and individualist in their attitude to economic questions their members were, on principle, bound, after 1918, to favour a union (*Anschluss*) of the 'little' Austria of St. Germain with Germany, if only to defend the interests of *Deutschum* in Central Europe. But most of them were realists, prepared to adapt themselves to the given situation and, as conservatives of the upper classes, indisposed to violence. With the rise of Nazism the advocacy of Pan-Germanism was to pass into younger, rougher, and more impatient hands.

### Economic Problems of the New Republic

Throughout its history the governments and the citizens of the Austrian Republic were faced with acute economic problems. The natural resources of the little country were such that it could not hope to be self-sufficient in its economic life. Of its whole surface, in relation to agricultural production, 10 per cent. was classed as unproductive, 34·5 per cent. as arable and meadows and 38 per cent. as forest, the remainder being divided between mountain pastures (16 per cent.) and gardens and vineyards (1·5 per cent.). Thus, taking 'unproductive' and forest together, nearly half the total area was of no value for purposes of food production, whilst another 16 per cent. was only available for use during part of the year.

Of that half of the country's population engaged in agriculture the majority were small peasant farmers or landless labourers. After 1918 there were few large landed estates in Austria except those of the Church, and these were usually rented in comparatively small holdings to tenant farmers. In 1922, 89·1 per cent. of all properties belonged to peasants, and of these holdings 10·3 per cent. were of less than half a hectare (1 hectare=about 2½ acres), 41·6 per cent. were between a half and five hectares, and only 2·7 per cent. were over

50 hectares.<sup>1</sup> Thus most of the Austrian peasantry could only hope to make a living by unremitting toil. Though some of the larger farmers in the more fertile valleys and the arable farmers in the Danube plain and the Burgenland could afford to adopt modern methods, the Austrian peasantry were for the most part a highly conservative class, deeply influenced by the Church and by their local traditions and customs.

For the Republic, especially in its early years, the most serious aspect of this agricultural situation was that it was heavily dependent on imports for much of the main necessities of life. The after-effects of the requisitioning of cattle during the war were long felt and prevented Austria from being self-sufficient even in dairy products. But there were other serious deficiencies in the food supply. As late as 1925, Sir Walter Layton and Professor Rist<sup>2</sup> reported to the League of Nations that Austria was still compelled to import more than half its wheat and sugar and about half its supplies of meat. The necessity to pay for the corn of Hungary and the pigs of Yugoslavia by exports across the new frontiers and against new protective tariffs bore heavily on the Republic, and most heavily on Vienna.

Industrially the Republic's position was little better. It had, indeed, one of the largest deposits in the world of magnesite, of special importance in the manufacture of light metals, and easily worked iron-ore deposits in Styria. But its coal and lignite were of inferior quality and inadequate for its needs, and in 1919 the wealth of water for electric power had been little developed, whilst boring for natural oil had hardly begun. As a result, the Republic had to import between three-quarters and four-fifths of its fuel at a cost, in 1925, of 195 million gold crowns. Since, in addition, it had to import raw or semi-finished goods for its other industries (e.g., textiles) its dependence on its ability to export was still further increased.

It was inevitable that, in the disturbed conditions at the end of the war, whilst new frontiers were being drawn with the surrounding States, the difficulties of the export trade should

<sup>1</sup> These figures are quoted by Mr. C. A. Macartney in *The Social Revolution in Austria* (Cambridge, 1926), p. 176, from the *Österreichisches Handbuch* for 1922.

<sup>2</sup> *The Economic Situation of Austria*, a report presented to the Council of the League by (Sir) W. T. Layton and Charles Rist, pp. 62-64.

have been acutely felt. But, apart from temporary factors, the break-up of the Empire necessarily involved an extremely difficult and painful process of economic readjustment. For many Austrian industries had relied on raw materials from parts of the Empire outside the frontiers of the new Republic. The great Alpin-Montan iron and steel concern in Styria had found local coal of too poor quality for its purposes and had drawn its supplies from Austrian Silesia. In the textile industry Austrian cotton yarn had been 'sent to be woven in Bohemia and returned to serve as raw material for the clothing, hosiery, and other finishing trades concentrated around Vienna'.<sup>1</sup> So, too, banking and financial houses were now cut off from former customers and faced with the rivalry of similar institutions in the new national states. It is obvious that this economic dislocation could not be easily or quickly overcome. Nor was the task made easier by the very natural desire of the Succession States to develop their own industries and to make themselves, so far as possible, financially and economically independent of the new Austria.

It was in Vienna that this problem was felt most acutely, for Vienna had been the economic and industrial, as well as the governmental and social capital of the Empire. Its population of nearly 2 million had been a natural growth in a State of over 50 million people, with a correspondingly large apparatus of civil servants, banks and offices, professional men and luxury trades of every kind. As the capital of a small republic its size was disproportionately large. It contained a great superfluity of civil servants and army officers to be pensioned off; bankers and business men who, if not ruined, were greatly impoverished; lawyers and doctors, whose clients could no longer afford litigation or medicine; shopkeepers and restaurateurs, whose jewels or clothes, furniture or furs, wines or foods could no longer find profitable purchasers; and a host of shop-assistants, clerks, waiters and domestic servants, whose services had been indispensable to the life of imperial Vienna but were no longer required in the grim new world which succeeded it.

But, in addition to these threatened members of the middle and upper classes, Vienna also contained the most highly-

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<sup>1</sup> Layton and Rist, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

organized and class-conscious working-class in Europe, which had built up a strong trade union organization, closely connected with the Social Democratic Party. Faced with unemployment and starvation their leaders sought to capture the machinery of the new State, and to turn it to their own purposes. Though defeated in the wider aim of socializing the Austrian State, they were sufficiently successful in the capital city to make 'Red Vienna' an object of envy and admiration to other working-class movements, and of hostility and even hatred to the capitalists, the middle class, and the peasantry of Austria..

### History of the Republic

The new Austria began its life in chaos. Its frontiers were undefined. Troops of all nationalities of the old Empire poured back through it to their homes. The food and fuel supplies of its 'over-mighty' capital were scanty and extremely precarious. A temporary wave of radical socialism, expressed in Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, threatened to submerge the new government before it could establish its authority. In the Alpine *Länder* themselves that authority was barely recognized and separatism went so far as to require passports between one *Land* and another, whilst armed forces of the *Länder*, calling themselves *Heimwehr* (Home Guard), were hastily organized against foreign and domestic enemies alike. Over the whole scene loomed the Allied demands for territorial sacrifices and for reparations. The financial obligations of a great Empire fell upon the shoulders of a tiny republic, for which the administrative machine, swollen by war, was far too large. The livelihood of many thousands of the upper and middle classes was directly threatened by the defeat, and their savings disappeared in the inflation, which followed it and continued almost unchecked for four years. Surrounded by its former subject peoples, now fiercely rejoicing in their new freedom; racked internally by deep social and political differences on all the problems with which it was faced; threatened with complete State bankruptcy and a consequent breakdown of its daily life, it is almost a miracle that the Austrian Republic survived at all. That it did so was mainly due to the loyal and self-sacrificing

work of the civil service, who stayed at their posts<sup>1</sup> and kept the administrative machine running often under very great difficulties, and to the temporary alliance, formed under stress of necessity, between the Social Democrat and Christian Social parties. At the elections for the National Assembly, held in February 1919, the Social Democrats secured 69 seats, the Christian Social party 63, and the Pan-Germans (or German Nationalists) 24. No party had a clear majority and a coalition government of Social Democrat and Christian Social Ministers was formed, in which the Socialists held the most important posts.

The short history of the Austrian Republic falls into four well-defined periods. From 1919-22 it was engaged in stabilizing a revolutionary situation, in drawing up its constitution and shaping its political system and in dealing with a prolonged economic crisis. From 1922-29, like Weimar Germany, it lived an outwardly normal life, mainly under Christian Social guidance, though behind the scenes social and political tension was growing. In 1929 it plunged into another economic crisis, accompanied by an increasing tendency to civil war, which was temporarily 'solved' by the establishment of Dollfuss' Catholic-Fascist dictatorship in 1933, followed by the suppression of the Socialist party in 1934. That solution lasted for 5 years, 1933-38, steadily undermined by Nazi pressure, and ended with the march of Hitler's legions into Austria on March 1938.

### 1919-1922

During the first of these periods (1919-22) the political character of the new republic was defined, in particular by the decisions taken by the Social Democratic party. During the spring and summer of 1919, whilst the short-lived communist regime of Kurt Eisner and his successors was in power in Bavaria (January-May 1919), and the Communist Government of Bela Kun in Hungary (21 March to 1 August 1919) the Austrian Socialists were under heavy pressure to adopt Bolshevik methods themselves and to introduce a dictatorship of the proletariat into Austria. But they adhered to their democratic principles and, by their alliance with the Christian

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<sup>1</sup> An Austrian joke had it 'der Hof vergeht, aber der Hofrat besteht'—'the Court fades out but the high official stands fast.'

Socialists, rejected the idea of a proletarian revolution in Austria. In doing so they condemned themselves, given the social structure of the new Austria, to the position of a permanent minority in the new democratic State. For, unless they could convert the individualist, Catholic and anti-Socialist peasantry to their creed they could never hope for a majority in the National Parliament. The short-lived wave of revolutionary sentiment, which had given them the largest number of seats in 1919, rapidly receded. In the elections of 1920, the Christian Social party gained more seats than the Socialists, who resigned from the government.

Thenceforward the Social Democrats of Austria formed the permanent opposition within the State. During 1919 they had been able to pass a considerable body of protective legislation for the benefit of the industrial working-class, including measures for the eight-hour day and for unemployment pay. But they failed to carry through any sweeping nationalization of industry; their democratization of the small standing army allowed by the Treaty of St. Germain was soon reversed by the Christian Social War Minister, Vaugoin, who succeeded the Social Democrat, Julius Deutsch; and, after they resigned from the government in June 1920, the Socialists never again held office.

Yet they remained a formidable and highly-organized force within the Austrian Republic and, having adopted an attitude of opposition to the central government, they concentrated their efforts on maintaining their control over the capital, Vienna. They had captured the municipal council in April 1919 and they secured the passage of a law, which came into force on 1 January 1922, by which Vienna was given the status of a *Land* under the constitution. Thus the large degree of local autonomy provided by the constitution for the *Länder*, which ensured a conservative-clerical regime in Styria or Salzburg or Tyrol, was acquired by the Socialists for their own party in Vienna, where the Social Democrat Burgomaster was also *Landeshauptmann*—President of the *Land*. The vital centre of Austria's life, containing over one-third of its total population, remained until 1934 under Socialist control.

This fact largely conditioned the political life of the Republic. Within the narrower sphere they had chosen the Socialists did a great work in providing housing and many social services and

amenities for the working-class of the capital. But, inevitably, the cost of their schemes had to be paid for by the already impoverished middle and upper classes of the city, who were particularly affected by the heavy imposts on house property and the severe rent restrictions imposed by the Viennese municipality. In choosing to pursue an uncompromising Socialist policy in their Viennese stronghold and in becoming a permanent party of opposition in the Federal parliament, the Social Democrats of Austria offered a common target to all the opponents of their ideas. The old contrast between Vienna and the Alpine *Länder* took on a new and sharper form, still more accentuated by the fact that the Viennese Socialists were Marxian and anti-Catholic and that religious and educational differences were added to economic.

Whilst the Socialists were entrenching themselves in Vienna the Austrian governments, drawn from the ranks of their political rivals, were faced with the economic chaos which succeeded the collapse of the Empire. The inflation of the Austrian currency began immediately the war ended and continued unchecked throughout 1920-21 until, by the end of the latter year, the *Krone* was on the way to becoming worthless. The inflation provided an artificial temporary stimulus to industry but it was accompanied by an unwholesome fever of speculation, which lowered the tone of public and commercial morality. It struck, too, at the basis of existence of all the thrifty, who lived on their savings, and of the very large number of pensioned officials of the State and of industry. By reducing many members of the middle class to a proletarian condition it deepened the bitterness of feeling between the different social classes.

It was a Christian Social Chancellor, Dr. Ignaz Seipel, who, in 1922, carried through the financial stabilization of Austria. By the end of 1921 the *Krone* had become virtually worthless,<sup>1</sup> and the only way to avoid national bankruptcy seemed to be by securing outside aid. In September 1922, Seipel stated Austria's case before the League of Nations and in October the Geneva Protocols were signed by Great Britain, France, Italy,

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<sup>1</sup> The following figures from V. W. Germain, *Austria to-day* (London, 1932), illustrate this. On 1 June 1922, one dollar = 11,175 *kröner*; 30 June, 15,900; 31 July, 42,350; 31 August, 77,300.

Czechoslovakia, and Austria. They had two aspects. By the first protocol the political and economic independence of Austria were again guaranteed—that is to say, the *Anschluss* was again excluded, and Austria again accepted the frontiers imposed at St. Germain. By the second protocol Austria was guaranteed a loan of 650 million gold crowns, but had to accept the supervision of a League Commissioner over her finances. A new Austrian National Bank was created, with statutes safeguarding the interests of Austria's creditors and empowered to exercise strict control over all dealings in foreign currency. The currency was stabilized and a new coin, the *Schilling*, replaced the *Krone*.<sup>1</sup> At considerable expense to her political and economic independence Austria had purchased at least temporary economic stability.

It was the idea of *Anschluss* with Germany, which Austria most clearly renounced in 1922. During 1920-21, a strong Pan-German agitation, supported by subsidies from Hugo Stinnes, the German coal and steel magnate, had resulted in unofficial plebiscites in Tyrol and Salzburg, which showed large majorities (Tyrol: 145,302 to 1,805; Salzburg: 103,000 to 800) for immediate union with Germany. Only after severe pressure from the Western Powers was the holding of plebiscites in the other *Länder* forbidden. It is true that these plebiscites were held whilst the inflation was reaching its height and whilst Austria appeared on the verge of war with Hungary to secure the frontiers allotted to her in the Burgenland. But they provide evidence that, at least whilst still under the shock of the break-up of the Empire and whilst the new Republic seemed unable to organize a satisfactory life for its citizens, the sentiment of German nationalism, and the desire to be part of a great German Reich, operated strongly in some of the *Länder*.

### 1923-1929

By the beginning of 1923 the major political and economic forces of the Austrian Republic seemed to have attained a certain equilibrium and, after a prolonged crisis, a period of 'normality' began. Politically, a balance of power had been established at least outwardly between Christian Social, or

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Gold *Krone* = 14,400 Paper *Kronen* = 1.44 *Schilling*.

Christian Social combined with moderate Pan-German, governments in the State and the Socialist government of Vienna. Economically, the currency was stabilized and, like Germany, Austria entered upon the years of somewhat factitious and comparative 'prosperity', to which American loans to Europe so largely contributed. The tourist traffic, upon which the Republic depended for acquiring much of the foreign currency required to purchase essential supplies for its economic life, greatly increased and there seemed some prospect that Austria might become another Switzerland. Indeed, if the Succession States continued to show, as they began to do, an increasing tendency to lower their tariffs and to co-operate with the Republic economically, it was not impossible that Vienna itself might recover much of her former economic importance, nor that a genuine prosperity might not be established.

Yet there were forces working against these hopeful prospects. Even during these years there remained a hard core of unemployment in Austria, amounting to nearly 10 per cent. of her labour force of some two million workers. And the persistence of the Viennese Socialists under their Burgomaster, Otto Seitz, and his able financial assistant, Hugo Breitner, in not merely providing support for the unemployed but in steadily improving the social amenities of the working-class at the expense of their social 'betters' was a constant provocation to the more conservative forces, whether in business circles or among the peasantry.

Beneath the surface of apparently normal political and economic life a steady organization of hostile forces was, in fact, in progress. On the Right the *Heimwehr* militia was being organized by Prince Starhemberg and others as a private army with aims that varied from *Land to Land* and from commander to commander—here primarily for a Habsburg restoration, there for a Pan-German policy of *Anschluss* with Germany—but everywhere united in one aim, the destruction of Austrian Socialism. On the other side the Socialists formed their own private army, the *Schutzbund*, for the defence of the democratic Republic and of their position within it. Already during these years the authority of the Austrian State as such was threatened by the existence of these unofficial armies and

a path that led straight to civil war had begun to be trodden by both sides.

This unhappy development was greatly accentuated by the influence of Dr. Seipel from within Austria, and by that of Mussolini and Italian fascism from without. It is as yet too early to judge fully and fairly Dr. Seipel's policy. But it is certain that, as priest as well as statesman, he stood first of all for an authoritative Catholicism and that he was, of necessity uncompromisingly opposed to the Marxian Socialism of the Viennese Socialists. His influence on the Christian Social Party, whether in or out of office, was very great and was steadily used in a conservative and anti-democratic direction. There is little doubt that he encouraged the growth of the *Heimwehr* and connived at its receipt of arms from Fascist Italy. Towards the *Anschluss* Seipel was discreetly cold. 'It is something which we must always advocate, but never put into effect' he is reported to have said, for it would involve the absorption of Catholic Austria into a predominantly Protestant Germany. Of such a policy Mussolini naturally approved. To secure a Catholic-authoritarian Austria as a northern bulwark against Germany, and to destroy the hot-bed of Socialism in Vienna, whence Socialist influence might revive the socialism of Milan and other Italian industrial cities, were aims to which he could, and did, give strong and active support. Even during these six years the growing danger of civil war in Austria showed itself clearly. In 1927 some *Heimwehr* men, accused of firing upon and killing two members of a Socialist parade, were acquitted. Thereupon, a great demonstration of protest was organized by the Socialists of Vienna and, when the police tried to break it up, an ugly riot followed, with deaths on both sides, and the Palace of Justice was burnt down. The grim face of civil war looked through the thin curtain of normality and the real struggle for power in Austria became more intense behind the façade of parliamentary democracy.

### 1929-1933

The latent crisis in Austria was brought to the surface by the economic crisis into which the country was plunged after the failure of one of the largest banks, the Boden-Credit-Anstalt, in the autumn of 1929. For two years the world-wide slump,

which had begun in New York, developed in intensity and, in May 1931, the climax was reached in Austria when the Credit-Anstalt, its largest bank also failed. Since Austrian industry was closely connected with the banking system the ruin of the one carried with it the ruin of the other, and the remedy of severe deflation, applied by Dr. Kienbock, was as little successful in Austria as in Germany or in Great Britain. Unemployment rose until over 30 per cent. of Austrian workers were out of work, whilst unemployment benefits were severely cut and there was a large measure of concealed unemployment, since those who had exhausted their insurance benefits ceased to appear in official returns. Meanwhile, the industrialists of Austria also suffered severely, though the fact that capital and labour were involved in a common ruin did nothing to soften social antagonisms.

The effect of the slump was, indeed, in Austria as elsewhere, to intensify them. In 1930, at the general elections, the Socialists again became the largest single party, though they did not take office. But the Christian Social Government replied by taking in two *Heimwehr* leaders, Prince Starhemberg and Hueber, into the Government. And, at the same time as the Christian Social leaders moved more definitely to the Right, there began a rapid development in the strength of the Austrian Nazi party which, as in Germany, had previously had little success at the polls. By April 1932, the Nazis had gained so large a following that, in the elections for the Diets of the *Länder* and for the town councils, they captured almost a third of the total representation.

The rise of Austrian Nazism coincided with, and was in fact assisted by, the refusal of the League to regard the Customs Union between Germany and Austria, negotiated during January and February 1931, and brusquely announced as a *fait accompli* in March, as valid. When the Permanent Court of International Justice had disallowed the agreement by the narrow majority of one (8 to 7), Austria had once again to seek salvation in League loans, accompanied as before by League supervision. But, on this second occasion, the Nazis in Germany had already been demanding the complete abandonment of the whole reparations system and their claim to *Gleichberechtigung* (equality of treatment) for Germany found a warm response among many Austrians who could see no

permanent solution of their country's economic ills except by a renewal of the project of economic, if not political, union between the two German States. Amongst the youth of Austria the appeal to German patriotism, as against the tutelage of foreigners, was especially strong and the methods and doctrines of Hitlerism—its violent racialism, anti-semitism, anti-parliamentarism—were enthusiastically adopted by large numbers of the Austrian youth. The older, more sober, realist Pan-Germans lost ground before a wave of Nazi enthusiasm, supported by the subventions of German heavy industry. The *Heimwehr* itself became 'Nazified' in some districts, as in Styria, where the Alpin-Montan iron and steel works had passed into the hands of August Thyssen, at that time a financial backer of Hitler. It was in this situation of economic distress and mounting political tension that, in May 1932, Engelbert Dollfuss, friend and disciple of Seipel, became Austrian Chancellor. His first months in office synchronized with the growing crisis in Germany, where Papen and the 'Cabinet of Barons' were seeking to stem the Nazi flood and bring the Socialists to heel. Immediately after Hitler's accession to power (January 1933) the Austrian Socialists precipitated a crisis (February 1933) by revealing to the world the fact that Mussolini was being allowed by the Dollfuss Government to export arms to the terrorists of Croatia *via* the Hirtenberg arms factory in Austria. The incident caused a European scandal and seriously shook Dollfuss' position both at home and abroad. But his opportunity of revenge on the Socialists for their 'unpatriotic' exposure of Mussolini's machinations against themselves, and against European peace, soon came.

On 5 March 1933 the parliamentary system in Austria committed suicide. After a stormy debate over a matter of procedure the President of the Chamber resigned his office and was followed in his action by the two Vice-Presidents. Since the Austrian constitution provided no compulsory procedure for such an unforeseen situation the Austrian parliament was in a state of suspended animation for lack of anyone authorized to call it together. Had he wished to overcome the difficulty Dollfuss could without doubt have found a legal or quasi-legal way out of it. But the opportunity was too good to be missed. The Austrian Parliament having, by its own action, abdicated

its functions, Dollfuss was glad to leave it in suspension and to rule by decree until he could carry into effect the policy he had learnt from his political master, Seipel.

### 1933-1938 : Dollfuss and Schuschnigg

That policy aimed at the establishment within Austria of an authoritarian—Catholic regime. It involved the destruction of the Austrian Socialist party and of the parliamentary system. But it also involved the suppression of Nazism, since this radical form of Pan-Germanism, preaching a new pagan worship of a tribal Germanic God, together with anti-Semitism and racialism, was wholly incompatible with Catholic doctrine. From the outset, therefore, Dollfuss was committed, in his internal policy, to a political war on two fronts—against Socialists and Nazis at the same time. To secure support he threw himself with vigour into propaganda and organization of the Austrian idea in order to create a positive sentiment behind his government amongst as many Austrians as possible. A single Front of Unity (*Einheitsfront*), with a single organization, was to defend Austrian independence as a Catholic State against all comers, even Germany. For, to Dollfuss, the *Anschluss* in any form which would involve the suppression of Austria's national individuality in the interest of a Greater Germany was abhorrent. He desired good relations, on a basis of mutual respect and co-operation, with the other Germanic State. But he was determined not to allow Austria to become a mere province of Germany.

By 1933 this policy had already become dangerous. Hitler was in power in Germany and, himself an Austrian, regarded his native country as an essential part of that Great German Reich, which he was determined to create. Austria was already involved in the coming German drive for mastery in Europe. Strategically important, but small and almost defenceless, she must needs look abroad for support, and in the first place to her neighbours, Italy and Hungary. So long as she could rely on their help, backed by the support of the Western Powers, against a resurgent Germany, Dollfuss' policy was not without promise.

During 1933 Dollfuss began to build a Catholic-Fascist bloc

consisting of Austria, Hungary, and Italy, which took shape in the Rome Protocols signed by the three States on 17 March 1934. They were directed towards the maintenance of the independence of the three signatories, and the increase of trade between them. But, though wholly unobjectionable in form to those States anxious to maintain existing conditions, they represented a defiance of Hitler's Pan-German ambitions and the first organization of a combination of forces to resist them. At home Dollfuss continued vigorously to propagate the Austrian idea and to attack both the rising tide of Nazi agitation and the Socialists. But, despite the heavy blow dealt to Austrian economy by Hitler's imposition of a fee of 1,000 marks for a visa to Austria from Germany, despite the violent radio propaganda against the Austrian Government conducted by Habicht from Munich, and despite the bomb outrages and acts of sabotage committed by the Nazis, Dollfuss refrained from drastic action against the Nazis during 1933. On the other hand, under pressure from the *Heimwehr* at home, and of his new ally, Mussolini, from abroad, he suppressed the Austrian Socialist Party, both in Vienna and in the provinces in February 1934. When called upon in Linz and Vienna by their armed opponents to give up their arms the Socialists decided at 'five minutes after 12' to resist. In Vienna they were soon faced by the artillery of the regular army. Their great blocks of flats were bombarded. Resistance was brief and hopeless and the 'rising', as the government called it, was rapidly suppressed.

Having crushed the strongest democratic and republican party Dollfuss pressed forward the reconstruction of the State on Catholic-Fascist lines. On 1 May 1934 he rounded off his programme for the internal affairs of Austria by signing a concordat with the Papacy and by promulgating a new constitution, whose preamble ran 'In the name of God from whom all right proceeds this constitution is issued for the Austrian people for its Christian, German, Federal State on a corporative basis.' The democratic system was set aside and the principle of nomination applied both to the councils appointed to advise the central government and to the organs of local government also.

Within a year of taking over the Chancellorship Dollfuss

had, thus, carried through a large part of the programme he had imbibed from Seipel. He had crushed Socialism and democracy, had created a Catholic-Fascist Austria, and had provided it with external support in Italy and Hungary. That a bitter resentment existed in the Viennese working-class and that many of the more democratic members of his old Christian Social Party disliked his programme did not immediately matter very greatly. But he had failed to check the growth of Nazi influence in Austria; the *Heimwehr* was increasingly unreliable as an instrument of his policy; and, on 25 July 1934, the Austrian Nazis struck the 'pocket Chancellor' down.

The *Putsch* made on that day by the Nazis failed in its object of seizing control of the Austrian government. Dollfuss, indeed, was shot in his Chancery and allowed to bleed to death by his Nazi murderers, who refused him the attendance of either a doctor or a priest. But Schuschnigg, another disciple of Seipel, was able to take over the government and, for four years more, to pursue the policy of his predecessor.

The murder of Dollfuss had, in a phrase almost outmoded, 'Shocked the civilized world'. But, what was more serious from Hitler's point of view, it had brought Italian troops to the Brenner and led to the meeting at Stresa, in September 1934, at which a joint declaration in support of Austrian independence was issued by Great Britain, France, and Italy. With his usual tactical skill Hitler determined to wait until the entente between these three Powers could be broken up. His chance soon came, for Mussolini's attack on Abyssinia was met by a half-hearted effort on the part of Great Britain and France to use the machinery of the League by imposing sanctions upon Italy. At once Mussolini began to turn towards Germany for support and Hitler was willing enough to soothe his apprehensions about Austria by offering Schuschnigg in 1936 a guarantee of Austrian independence, which he had no intention of keeping. By 1937 Schuschnigg had learnt that Mussolini, now Hitler's partner in Spain, was neither able nor willing to resist German demands on Austria by force. Meanwhile, the Nazi movement in Austria continued to grow and to undermine by every means in its power the authority of the government. In February 1938 Schuschnigg was summoned to Berchtesgaden, browbeaten by Hitler and presented with an ultimatum. His last desperate effort to

reconcile the working-class to his government, by restoring the rights of the trade unions, and to hurry through a plebiscite in favour of Austrian independence, was not given time to mature. On 12 March 1938 the German army poured across the Austrian frontiers unresisted and was welcomed with wild enthusiasm by the ardent young Nazis in Austria itself. Pan-Germanism triumphed over Austrian socialism, monarchism, Catholicism, and liberalism alike. Within a brief time the very name Austria (*Österreich*) was forbidden. Vienna became a provincial town of the Great Reich, and the historic *Länder* became seven *Reichs-Gaue* under Nazi *Gauleiter*. A process of rigorous *Gleichschaltung* (co-ordination) was set in motion in every sphere—political, economic, religious, and cultural. Under the slogan of 'Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer' (one People, One Realm, one Leader) all distinctions between German and German-Austrian were to be obliterated. A new religion of the State, a worship of force and brutality, was substituted for the old culture of Austria and all the ingenious ferocity of the Gestapo was available to teach the Austrian people that the tribal God of *Deutschtum* was a jealous god who would tolerate no rival.

### The Problem of Austria

When, at length, the Nazi system has been broken down the problem of Austria will present itself in a new guise, amongst circumstances that it is at present difficult to foresee. With the complete defeat and demilitarization of Germany the strategic position of Austria in Europe will be changed. The northern frontier of Italy will no longer be threatened by a Teutonic drive into the Lombard Plain, and it will be rather as a possible path for the passage of Slavonic forces into Southern Germany that Austria will retain some of its strategic significance.

Within Austria itself the old divergence of outlook between Vienna and the Alpine *Länder* will probably reappear, though it may take new forms. It is not improbable that, in reaction against the centralizing efforts of the Nazi Pan-Germans, the loyalties of the agricultural community to the individual *Land* may have become more conscious even than before 1938, and, if so, federalism may be more rather than less necessary as the constitutional form of the new Austria.

The position of Vienna itself in the restored State may have

been modified by the drastic Nazi purge, or 'liquidation,' of its Jewish population. The surprised remark of a Carinthian peasant to a distinguished Austrian professor and Alpine climber: 'You come from Vienna, but you're not a Jew', may no longer be appropriate. And a greater degree of rapprochement between the capital city and the Alpine *Länder* may be possible as a result. Yet Vienna, if it is to live, must retain its character as a cosmopolitan centre of industry and commerce for south-eastern Europe, as well as the political and administrative centre of the Austrian State itself. This alone will cause the old divergence between the capital and the *Länder* to re-emerge, and the probable revival of Austrian Social Democracy, with its centre in Vienna, will still further hasten this result.

The effect of Nazi rule on the Austrian bureaucracy, which did so much between 1918 and 1938 to maintain the life of the Republic, is likely to have been disastrous. In so far as its personnel has been purged to make way for Nazis the change is certain to have been for the worse. And our knowledge of the corrupting influence of the Nazi Party in the bureaucracy of Germany itself is enough to discourage over-optimistic views about the condition in which the Austrian civil service will be found after seven years of Nazi rule. Neither the old liberalism of outlook, nor the old integrity of character, can be expected to have survived intact.

Nor can Austrian culture have been unaffected by the experience of incorporation in Nazi Germany. In so far as it was a Catholic culture the influence of the Church must have been diminished by the feeble collapse of the Austrian episcopate in 1938. On 28 March 1938 Cardinal Innitzer issued a declaration signed by himself and all the Austrian bishops, which was ordered to be read in all Austrian Churches. 'We, the bishops of the Austrian Church declare with the deepest conviction, and of our own free will, that we recognize with joy that the National Socialist movement has achieved and is achieving outstanding work in . . . social policy, particularly [among] the poorest of the people.' And they went on to declare that 'on the day of the plebiscite<sup>1</sup> it will naturally be

<sup>1</sup> The immediate cause of Hitler's march into Austria was Schuschnigg's declared intention to hold a plebiscite, which was expected to give a large majority against the *Anschluss*. Hitler's plebiscite, held under Nazi auspices, yielded the startling pro-Nazi majority of 99.57 of votes cast.

for us bishops, as Germans, to declare ourselves for the German Reich, and we expect from all faithful Christians a sense of their debt to their race.' Those who betray their own cause cannot expect to retain the respect of their supporters, and the Nazi persecution of the Catholic Church in Austria since that declaration of the bishops must have shaken the faith of many Austrian Catholics not only in the courage but in the wisdom of their leaders. Combined with the effects of the direct teaching of Pan-German paganism, it is difficult to believe that the authority and influence of the Catholic Church over the youth of Austria has not been very considerably diminished since 1938.

It is in this changed situation that the conditions already posed as necessary for political stability in an Austria, liberated under the terms of the Moscow Declaration, fall to be considered. How far can we expect to find that desire for independence, that degree of internal political unity and that capacity to provide a satisfactory standard of living, which are necessary to a healthy life for the revived State? Handicapped by the fog of war, which permits only transitory and incomplete glimpses of existing conditions in Austria, it is difficult to give any firm and satisfactory answer.

It is, indeed, very probable that, after their bitter experience of the consequences of union with Nazi Germany, a majority—perhaps a large majority—of Austrians will be in favour of independence. It is known that many even of the Austrian Nazis were rapidly disillusioned after March 1938, especially when they found that most of the important posts in the Nazi administration were filled by Nazis from the Reich. It is also certain that many Austrians, who favoured the *Anschluss* from economic motives, in order to relieve the Austrian economy by integrating it with that of Germany, as well as many others, who hoped for an *Anschluss* which would leave Austria a large measure of political and cultural autonomy, will be glad to escape from the economic and political dominance of the 'gentlemen from Berlin'. To none of these former supporters of the *Anschluss* will a beaten and broken Germany, charged with the duty of making amends for the destruction she has wrought throughout Europe, present any immediate attraction.

Yet it cannot be assumed that there will not be a revival of

German national feeling in Austria in the future. The old ties of common speech, of a share in *Deutschtum*, will remain and, with the disappearance of the Nazi Party and of the cruder forms of Pan-Germanism, the old liberal idea of a federated *Grossdeutschland*, the ideal of many of the democrats of 1848, may live again. This is the more likely because the Social Democrats and Communists of Austria will no longer be alienated from Germany by a Nazi or militarist regime hostile to themselves in power there, and with the destruction of their political enemies in the Reich their desire for *Anschluss* with a Social-Democrat or Socialist-Communist Germany may very probably reappear. Indeed, the demands now being made by some Austrian Social-Democrats in exile for the incorporation of the Sudetenland in a revived Austrian Republic clearly indicate the persistence of German patriotism in their breasts. Equally, Catholic Austrians of the old Christian Social Party may well turn their eyes towards their fellow-Catholics of southern Germany and of the Rhineland and may combine clerical-conservative with patriotic motives in hoping for a future federated German Reich, of which Austria would be a member State. It is, therefore, possible that Austrian desire for independence may not prove permanent and it is the less likely to do so if the citizens of Austria can neither find a satisfactory focus for their loyalty, nor agree sufficiently amongst themselves upon the conduct of their State.

Despite its long history the 'little' Austria recognised by the Treaty of St. Germain never captured the imagination of many of its citizens in its republican-democratic form. Not only did they find the transition from membership in a great State to membership of a second Switzerland difficult to accept, but the republican system of parliamentary government was foreign to their experience and their traditions and failed to arouse their enthusiasm. It is significant that, when Dollfuss and Schuschnigg preached 'the Austrian idea', there followed a marked revival of monarchical feeling, which led to a partial return of their former estates to the Habsburgs in 1935, and to the election of the Archduke Otto as an honorary citizen by over 700 small towns and villages between 1934 and 1938. A large number of Austrians required a personal ruler, with rights derived from heredity, upon whom to focus their loyalty.

Politically a Habsburg restoration, which would be regarded by a restored Czechoslovakia and Jugoslavia as threatening their territorial integrity, is even more impossible now than it was in 1938. Yet, if Austria as an independent State is to succeed, it is all the more necessary that her citizens shall give their loyalty to the State itself and to the form of government which they choose after the present war. To do this successfully, profound changes in the political atmosphere of the country will be necessary.

For Republican Austria between 1918 and 1938 displayed the same phenomenon of political intolerance and totalitarianism as was displayed in Germany and elsewhere. The desire for a complete *Weltanschauung* (philosophy of life), a well-rounded and comprehensive system of ideas, is certainly a German trait. And only recently the S.S. paper *Das Schwarze Korps* has written 'Eine tolerante Weltanschauung ist keine Weltanschauung.'<sup>1</sup> In pre-Hitler Austria three exclusive politico-religious systems stood face to face. The Christian Social and the Social Democrat Parties had each its own set of social institutions, its own system of education in its own ideas; its own cultural and recreational societies; its own co-operative organizations; its own funds for sickness and burial. Both the Catholic Social and Social Democrat Groups sought to provide in totalitarian fashion for every need of their members from the cradle to the grave. And, even though the no less totalitarian Pan-German Nazi Group is eliminated by the present struggle, its place is likely to be taken by a Communist Party quite equally rigid and exclusive in outlook and institutions.

It may be that common experience in adversity will have softened some of these cleavages in Austria and that Christian Social and Social Democrat leaders will arise sufficiently realist and undocinaire, sufficiently endowed with the sense of the State as opposed to that of the party, to be able to work together. That such a combination is not impossible is shown by the long years during which a Centre-Social Democrat<sup>2</sup> coalition

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<sup>1</sup> 'A tolerant philosophy of life is no philosophy of life.'

<sup>2</sup> The Centre (*Zentrum*) Party was the Catholic Party in Germany, which corresponded broadly to the Austrian Christian Social Party.

ruled Prussia under the Weimar Republic. Perhaps the process may be aided by the rivalry of a Communist Party as hostile to the Social Democrats as to the Christian Social Party. But, leaving speculation aside, it is at least certain that the leaders of all the Austrian parties will require to develop the arts of compromise as well as to place the State before Party if a second democratic republic is not to see the revival of private armies, the renewal of civil war, and the establishment of a dictatorship whether of the Right or the Left.

A peaceful development of internal politics in a revived independent Austria will depend in large measure upon its capacity to provide a satisfactory economic life for its citizens. Since the conditions of international trade in Europe after the war are unknown it is impossible to assess with any degree of accuracy how far this will be possible. But it is clear that the Austrian economy will continue to depend to a considerable degree upon the capacity to exchange goods and services with other nations. Even under the stimulus of high protection given to agriculture by the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime some 28 per cent. of Austria's imports in 1937 consisted of live animals and foodstuffs, and even the degree of self-sufficiency attained was, in part, due to a reduction in home consumption as a result of unemployment and of the lower wages paid in industry after the suppression of the trade unions in 1934. Moreover, throughout the years of financial recovery after the second appeal to the League for assistance (1931) the level of unemployment remained inordinately high.

In the post-war world Austria will have certain new difficulties to face and some new advantages. It cannot be expected that, for some time after the war, her volume of tourist traffic will rise to a level high enough to contribute very considerably to her balance of trade. Even for the English, winter sports will have to give way to income tax. On the other hand the further development of hydro-electric power will help to diminish Austria's need for imported fuel; as will the development, which has taken place during the war, of the substantial deposits of natural oil near Vienna.

On balance the prospects of a restored Austria do not appear to be less favourable than those of the former Republic. But, in judging the question whether independent Austria will be

*lebensfähig* it is essential to remember that this term is a very elastic one. The Republic itself could probably have provided work for all, or nearly all, its industrial workers if they had not themselves enforced, through their trade unions, and the Social Democratic Party, a standard of pay and of livelihood considerably higher than they had enjoyed before 1918. What those who remained in employment gained was paid for by the unemployment of the rest. It will probably be impossible for a restored Austria to offer its workers a standard of living and wages as high as that of those workers who remained in employment under the Republic. It is, therefore, probable that, at least for some time after the war, a generally reduced standard of living will be necessary if all employable Austrians are to find work. But, if other circumstances in the international field are favourable, there may be grounds for hoping that some improvement in such a reduced standard of living may become possible.

For it is the nature of Austria's relations with her neighbours that will be decisive of her economic fate. For a long time to come the peoples of Rumania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Greece, to say nothing of the more highly-industrialized Czechoslovakia, could benefit by exchanging their products for those of Austria's skilled workmen. Granted stable and co-operative relations with these States there is reason to suppose that a revived Austria could offer to its population, itself likely to decline in the near future,<sup>1</sup> a reasonable standard of economic well-being.

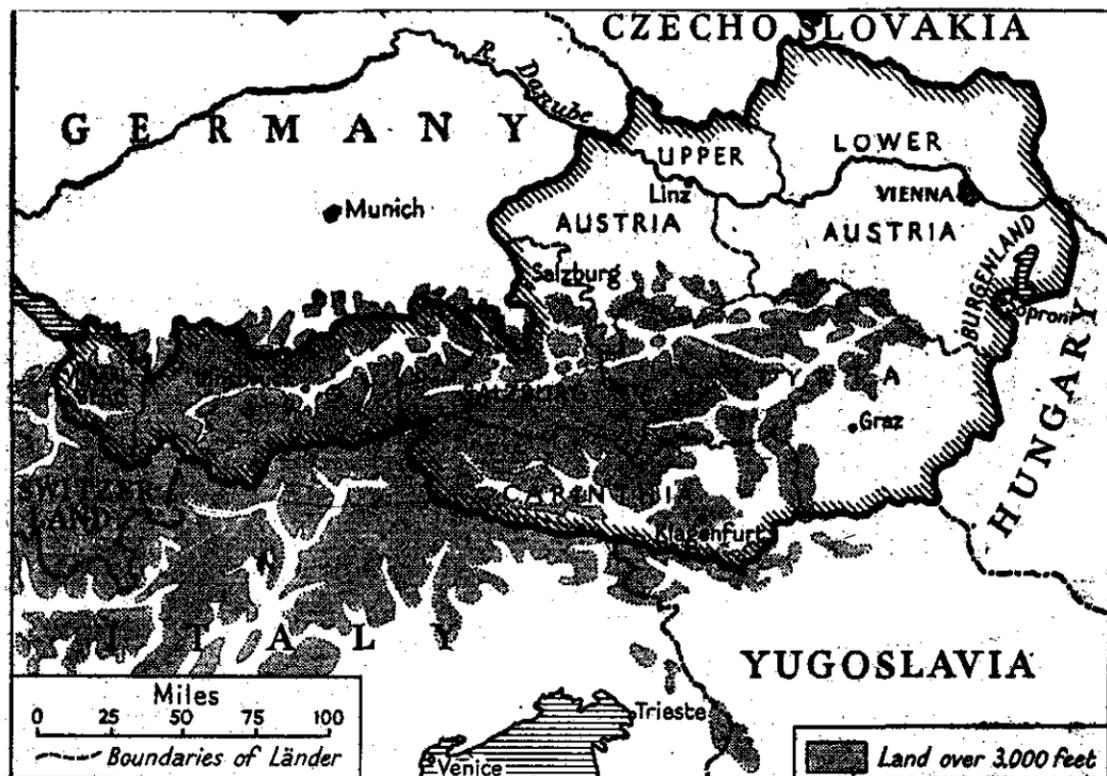
The Austrian problem, like most major political problems, is too complex to admit of any neat, clear-cut, and satisfying solution. No doubt, once the Austrians are freed from the Nazi grip, the responsibility for their own future will rest in part upon themselves. But it is to be hoped that the major Powers will have learnt from the history of the Austrian republic, with its internal politics bedevilled by pressure from Mussolini on one side and from Hitler on the other, that Austria, as little as Czechoslovakia, is not merely 'a little country of which we know nothing' and, by implication, can afford to care less. Like all small countries its stability and independence depend,

<sup>1</sup> In each year from 1934-38 the net reproduction rate in Austria was well below the rate necessary to maintain the existing population.

in the last resort, upon not being involved in the power politics of its great neighbours.

The close parallel between German and Austrian political development between 1918 and 1933 should have taught Europe that any purely nationalist settlement after the present war may revive rather than extinguish the idea of the *Anschluss*. The *revolution manquée* in both cases; the revival of the anti-democratic forces; the depth of doctrinal difference between the political parties; the growth of private, or party, armies; the movement towards totalitarian and authoritarian rule—these common developments reveal the degree of national resemblance and the closeness of personal and party connexions between Reich Germans and German-Austrians. So far as the military revival of Germany remains a possibility after the present war the reappearance of the *Anschluss* idea would be an immediate danger signal to Europe. And if the second great contest between the nationalist forces of Europe leaves the force of nationalism as strong, or stronger, than ever, the purely negative policy of preventing a union of the Germans and German-Austrians in a single State is a necessary and elementary precaution for all other Europeans.

It is, however, possible to hope that nationalism itself may lose some of its emotional appeal in the future Europe. This hope may seem ill-founded whilst the passions aroused by the present war are at their height. Yet the need for co-operation between the peoples of Europe, of whom we are one, is compelling, if they are to avoid mutual self-destruction and to save their civilization from ruin. It is evidently necessary to create a New Order in Europe which will not be, like Hitler's an *ersatz* product—a cruel fraud issuing in a system of ruthless exploitation. Within a genuine New Order the problem of Austria would prove not only capable of solution, but would lose many of its difficulties. Without it, the coming period of peace will be as little stable as was its predecessor. It will be a mere interval between two wars, and in the political atmosphere of such a Europe neither the Austrian nor any other major political problem will be likely to find a satisfactory settlement.



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