

IN WHOSE CAMP?

IF one wishes to know the reasons for the decline and ultimate failure of the Austrian Republic in the space of some fifteen years, one cannot do better than read Miss Mary Macdonald's succinct, clear, well-informed and amply documented account.¹ The documentation, especially in the form of lengthy quotations in German, is perhaps too full for the average reader; but the latter may be confidently recommended to restrict himself to the text, for the author's knowledge and control of her sources are beyond dispute. Not that there ever was any serious dispute about either the facts or the records: differences of opinion have been largely ideological, the tendency to see a bloodthirsty fascist in every opponent of the Vienna Socialists or, on the other hand, the fear of the red hand of Bolshevism in every expression of a democratic spirit. These were extremes, but a middle way was rendered difficult by excesses on both sides and the inevitably limited capacity of the not ignoble men who tried to take it.

The elements of dissolution at once showed themselves in 1918. Austrians who had formed the habit of living in an empire could not easily conceive the possibility of a single nation-state within their sadly shrunken frontiers; Vienna was an imperial capital or nothing. Hence the attempt to create still smaller states out of the *Länder*, or for such a province as Vorarlberg to seek union with Switzerland² —the nearest neighbour, with a people speaking almost a common dialect and offering an economic prosperity such as even a united Austria could scarcely hope to create. Provincial independence, the deep-rooted hostility of the country for the town, the Catholic spirit of the peasant also led to the isolation of Socialist Vienna and held up attempts to create some kind of unity. Simultaneously, partly as a result of the economic upheaval and partly in the hope of creating a Socialist Greater Germany, there was a strong desire for the *Anschluss* which found formal expression in the Declaration of 12th November 1918, that German-Austria was an integral part (*Bestandteil*) of the German Republic. This question, among others, was an occasion of strife between the Christian Socialists, who were more hopeful of creating a new and independent Austria, and the Social

¹ *The Republic of Austria, 1918-1934: A study in the failure of democratic government.* (Cumberlege, Oxford University Press; 8s. 6d. net.)

² See Dr Ender's appeal to the League of Nations, issued at Bregenz, August 1, 1920, which is supported by an account of the independent history of the Vorarlberg to show that they are not merely trying to escape the misery of the present time nor the consequences of a lost war.

Democrats; strange allies of the latter—on this question only—were the Pan-Germans, recruited from the more prosperous middle-classes, 'liberals', capitalists, industrialists, whom Franz Josef had hated quite as thoroughly as he hated the Socialists. When the *Schützbund* was formed as a political army, it called forth an armed response from the supporters of another brand of politics: the *Heimwehr* began to be active and the political struggle became open strife, as near as could be to civil war. The struggle became three-cornered when the Nazis took over power in Germany, Dollfuss and Schuschnigg suppressing Social Democracy by acts of which the bitter memory still impedes Austrian unity and scandalises those who can hardly be expected to distinguish between the Catholic dictator and the Church which is indifferent to forms of government, liquidating the *Heimwehr* gradually but effectively, only to be finally overcome—lonely but not unheroic figures—by Nazi ruthlessness.³

Miss Macdonald has admirably explained the sequence of events leading to the situation of which the National Socialists were able to take advantage for the complete overthrow of Austria. Although her academic and mildly insular outlook tends to colour her judgments, these are always fair and generally sympathetic. But she has not examined—and indeed it was no part of her task to examine—the deeper causes of the Austrian failure and the possibility of an Austrian revival.

Grillparzer and Strauss come nearer to the root of the matter. Franz Josef was a symbol and his passing meant the end of Austria not only to unhistorical minds; but it was the shadow of Field Marshal Radetzky which lay across the century. *In deinem Lager ist Oesterreich*, Grillparzer assured him in 1848, his brilliant victories in Italy having gained for him the esteem of the young emperor whose accession to the throne was the beginning of the long, slow death of Austria; for the prolongation of that flickering life Radetzky, and still more the peasant conscripts who marched from all corners of the empire to Strauss's heartless music in their leader's honour, were responsible: it was not too difficult for them, since the tune was catchy and the word of command simple, *Denn: Vorwärts! ist ung'risch und bömisch*. It was not least simple because it had lost all meaning: the soldiers no longer marched forward, but stood in defence of a tottering empire.

By 1918 even the personal loyalty had broken down. The Austria

³ The 'martyrdom' of Dollfuss was perhaps given too much of a religious significance, but what other ruler in those wretched 30's came anywhere near to giving his life for his country? And all too little significance has been attached to the courage of Schuschnigg, who refused to set a precedent for the many European governments in exile but stayed to face the appalling—and at the time quite incalculable—consequences of his bold personal resistance.

for which the conscripts had died, the Austria which Radetzky defended and Franz Josef symbolised, no longer existed. Czechs and Magyars no longer heeded the German word of command, but sought a new expression of a national ideal—at worst dormant, often actively propagated, under the Habsburg regime. But German-Austria had been the well-cultivated and specially favoured lord's demesne in that gigantic feudal estate. For a national and independent spirit its inhabitants had to look back a thousand years, and it is not surprising that the attempts to revive it by Dollfuss and Schuschnigg were somewhat artificial. And when the effort was made, it led them not only to the Duchy of the Babenbergers, a true and independent *Reich* as distinct from the *Mark* or outpost of empire which Charlemagne had made it, but also to Walther von der Vogelweide who first sang *Deutschland über Alles*. Nor could they escape the consequence of the *Nibelungentreue*, especially when friendly visitors like Papen were at hand to remind them of it.

It was never possible for Austria to be wholly independent of a wider German culture, and until recently no one thought that it could be. Even if they had not wanted political unity, the Socialists regarded Austria as a German land until Hitler caused them hurriedly to change their minds; Seipel had maintained the possibility of having one nation in two states; and Schuschnigg took his leave of the Austrian people 'with a *German* word of farewell', insisting on his country's right to independence but refraining from defending the right, 'because we are not willing to shed *German* blood'. It is true that there were not wanting many who would have been willing to fight and who did not agree with Schuschnigg's emphasis on the German element in the Austrian idea; but this only indicates how far pre-Anschluss Austria was from discovering an authentic ideal which, however difficult to express, would have rallied the people to such resistance at least that would have made the conquest of Austria as manifest an injustice as the invasion of Poland.

Confusion remains. The position is complicated, or rather made well-nigh unendurable, by the presence of occupying armies and the pressure of economic scarcity; but if these conditions were rapidly changed, if Austria could enjoy her own resources and properly manage her own affairs, it is difficult to see how she could begin to form a national life of her own. 'Let the people sing', is not at all a bad motto; but this most musical of peoples cannot now even find something to sing. The efforts to find a new national anthem have been in every sense of the word pathetic. Haydn had to be abandoned because the music had been exploited by the power-seeking Prussians and harnessed to *Deutschland über Alles* and the words, *Gott erhalte unseren Kaiser*, did not appeal to a government which had set its

face against the Habsburgs. Mozart seemed to be coming to the rescue, but the new rulers of Austria—it appears—are not enthusiastic about singing, *Bruder, reich die Hand zum Bunde*.

Can the Catholic Church—to which the majority of Austrians profess allegiance—create some unity amid this chaos and foster a new patriotism to contribute to the harmony of Europe? It does not seem so. Catholicism has very little to say in what was the last stronghold of Byzantinism in the West. The ghost of Constantine seemed often to linger around the throne of Franz Josef and the solemn celebration of the Church's feasts brought no small enhancement to the glory of the House of Austria. The Counter-reformation restored Bohemia to the Church and maintained over it the power of the Catholic emperor, but it also led many to seek the spirit of Christ in a religious community which appeared to be less entangled in the political struggle and nearer to the heart of the common people. In our own times, the treatment of the Socialists by statesmen who professed to be giving effect to a *Catholic* programme, has effectively alienated the sympathies of large groups both within and outside Austria. And it is too much to ask Anglo-Saxon Protestants to believe that a country whose hierarchy, if it did not give a unanimous welcome to the invader from the north, found no words with which to protest against *this* injustice, had the same will to independence as Catholic Belgium where Cardinals in two wars have led the opposition with dignity and effectiveness.

If there is to be a distinctive Austrian spirit, giving life to the very sick remnant of St Germain Austria, it must arise in the future and out of conditions that we cannot yet foresee. Meanwhile the leaders cannot but look to the United Nations for help to put their house in order—some of the Social Democrats are beginning to insist that they can manage very well for themselves, if only the occupying armies get out of the way, but in fact they have no choice. But if Austrian life is to pursue a natural course at all, it cannot be subjected to the domination of its Slav neighbours or of Russia through them; on the other hand, relations with the West, however friendly, cannot give any fundamental character to the new state. With Germany it is different. The memory of the Nazis and allied policy will exclude a new *Anschluss* for many a long year; but the Austrians will not cease to study Goethe and listen to Beethoven with an enthusiasm not only greater than in any country outside Germany but also of a character which would not be mis-called patriotic. And in a world in which the only certainty is that the future will be vastly different from the past, we need not be over-anxious if two such utterly defeated countries attempt to unite their shattered forces in a single polity.

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