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THE AUSTRIAN PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

On 29 April the formation of an "Austrian Provisional Government" in Vienna was announced through Soviet channels and the new regime assumed office on the following day. It has not been and apparently will not be immediately recognized by Great Britain and the United States. In this former enemy country there has been no opportunity to test opinion under Military Government by holding local elections, or to insure the existence of law, order, and free expression of opinion as the basis for the establishment of a national administration.

The new "government" appears to correspond roughly with the prevailing political complexion of the country. The ministers who have been selected are not puppets but party members of long standing, with creditable records in their individual fields. The Christian Social representatives are notably all from the party's left wing; none have compromised themselves by important connections with the former regimes of Dollfuss or Schuschnigg. On the other hand, since the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and National Defense (both of which are held by Social Democrats) will be of little consequence for some time, the key posts (Interior and Education) are in Communist hands.

The prominence of the positions held by Communists reflects both Soviet sponsorship and the increased importance of the Austrian Communists. Recent intelligence has confirmed the fact that the Communists are considerably more numerous today than during the first Austrian Republic, when they represented only an insignificant minority. However, it is questionable whether this increased strength alone would have won the same positions for the Communists.

The establishment of this "provisional government" seems to violate the spirit, if not the letter, of the Moscow and Crimea Declarations. Technically the Soviets may argue that they have not themselves accorded recognition to the new Austrian "provisional government." Actually this "government" has been established with their support and could only have taken office with their consent.

The Soviets have taken two steps to try to make the *fait accompli* appear more palatable and more consistent with prior Allied agreements. The Moscow Declaration had made it clear that Austria's treatment would depend on the Austrians' contribution to their own liberation. Up to now, most reports have agreed that such effort would not be of significant proportions. Since 13 April, however, the Soviets have publicly stressed and praised the role of Austrian resistance movements in expelling the Nazis. In this fashion the Soviets have sought to provide

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a "legal" basis for the quick gift of a "provisional government." Secondly, by dividing the Cabinet posts among the three major parties and by selecting a few formerly prominent figures for these posts, the Soviets have sought to anticipate criticism that the "government" was unrepresentative.

Available reaction from Austrian exile groups in Great Britain and the United States suggests that, while most non-Communists deplore the methods by which the "provisional government" has been established, they are prepared to adopt an attitude of full or acquiescent support. Since these expressions have been made prior to official action by Great Britain and the United States, they may later be modified in the light of the stand taken by the Anglo-American Governments.

The Austrian "provisional government" follows the pattern used in Czechoslovakia. Headed by a Chancellor or chief of state, it comprises three ministers without portfolio (a Social Democrat, a Christian Social and a Communist) and a Cabinet of ten ministers (five Social Democrats, four Christian Socials, three Communists, and two non-party men).

The Chancellor, Dr. Karl Renner, a 73-year-old Social Democrat, is a former Chancellor (1918-20) and a former Secretary of Foreign Affairs (1920). A member of Parliament both under the monarchy (1907-18) and under the first Republic (1918-34), he was president of the *Nationalrat* (the National Assembly or lower house) at intervals under the Republic until the establishment of the Dollfuss regime in March 1933. In 1934, Dr. Renner retired to his country home in Gloggnitz. He can probably best be classified as a right-wing Socialist. Dr. Renner has been criticized for his decision in 1938 to declare that he had always favored *Anschluss*, in exchange for a Nazi promise to accord lenient treatment to his old friend, Robert Danneberg. The Nazis made political capital of Renner's statement, but Danneberg died in a concentration camp.

In view of Dr. Renner's age, it appears certain that his advisors, the three ministers without portfolio, will be the dominant element in the new regime. They are Dr. Adolph Schaerf (Social Democrat), Leopold Kunschak (Christian Social), and Johann Koplénig (Communist). Schaerf, a 50-year-old lawyer, was considered one of the most influential politicians during the period of 1918-34. Named secretary to Karl Seitz, the Mayor of Vienna, in 1918, he was subsequently appointed secretary of the Austrian Social Democratic delegation in the Austrian Parliament and in 1933 was elected Federal Councillor of Vienna. He retired from political life to practice law, following Dollfuss' assumption of power in 1934. Kunschak is a 73-year-old saddler who founded the first Christian Social workers association in 1892 and was the leader of the Christian Social Party under the first Republic. A member of the Vienna City Council (1904-34), the *Reichsrat* (1907-18), and the *Nationalrat* (1918-34), he was elected to the Presidency of the Christian Social Party in 1920. Kunschak served as State Councillor under both the Dollfuss and Schuschnigg regimes but not in a political capacity and therefore is not regarded as compromised by these associations. Koplénig, a 55-year-old

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shoemaker, has been a member of the Communist Party in Austria since about 1918, and was the Party's chairman from 1927-33. When the Party was outlawed in 1933, he went to Moscow and organized the Austrian Communist emigrants in the USSR. For many years he was a member of the Central Committee of the now officially disbanded Comintern.

Most of the other members of the new regime have had prominent careers and well-established political affiliations. Minister of National Defense Franz Winterer, about 50, was a Social Democrat until 1934. His present political leanings are uncertain. A non-commissioned officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army during World War I, he remained with the *Volkswehr* (the Army of the Republic) afterwards and was commissioned. As a captain in 1934 he was placed in the embarrassing position of having to lead his troops against the anti-Dollfuss Republican Defense Corps (*Republikanischer Schutzbund*). He was also active in the Social Democratic Outing Club "*Die Naturfreunde*." After the German occupation of Austria in 1938 he was called up into the German Army and was subsequently promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

Minister of the Interior Franz Honner, a 45-year-old ex-miner, has for many years been a member of the Communist Party and Communist town councillor of Gruenbach. After 1934 he was active in the leftist underground movement against Dollfuss and was arrested and sent to prison in 1935. Later he escaped from a concentration camp and went to Moscow where he became a propagandist for the Austrian Communist Party and a member of the Free Austria Movement for Styria and Carinthia.

Minister of Justice Josef Geroe, for many years public prosecutor in Vienna, is a 50-year-old non-party man. Dr. Geroe participated in the trials of Dollfuss' murderers and was sent to the Dachau concentration camp by the Nazis in 1938. Minister of Finance George Zimmerman, another non-party man, held several minor positions in the Finance Ministry under the first Republic and in 1934 was appointed chief of a branch in the Ministry. He is 58.

Minister of Agriculture Rudolph Buchinger, a democratic Austrian Peasant leader, was for many years a member of the National Assembly and during 1922-26 held this same Cabinet post. He is a Christian Social, and a close collaborator of the late Governor Reither of Lower (North) Austria who was killed by the Nazis at Dachau.

Minister of Industry, Trade, and Transport Eduard Heigl, 65, has been active in the Christian Social Party since his youth. Member of the Assembly from 1918-33, he several times was Minister of Commerce, Trade, and Industry under the first Republic. Former president of the Austrian Broadcasting Company and the Vienna Fair, he retired from political life under the Dollfuss regime because of Dollfuss' fascist ideology.

Minister of Instruction and Religion Ernst Fischer was a Social Democratic editor and writer until 1932 when he led the Party's left-

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wing Young Socialists in opposition to Dollfuss. Following Dollfuss' *coup* in 1934, Fischer fled to Czechoslovakia, joined the Communist Party, and went to Moscow to become the chief commentator on Austrian problems. He is 45 years old.

Minister of Food Andreas Korb, a 45-year-old Social Democrat, is an outstanding expert in the fields of food supply and the cooperative movement and the author of numerous articles in these fields. He has been a director of the Association of Austrian Consumers' Cooperatives but has not been politically active in the Social Democratic Party. He is about 45 years old.

Minister of Public Welfare Johann Boehm is a 55-year-old construction worker and Social Democrat, who was an active organizer of the Trade Union of Construction Workers and of small farmers in Burgenland. He was a member of the National Assembly from 1927-34.

Minister of Building and Reconstruction Julius Raab is a 55-year-old architect and engineer who for many years served as president of the powerful Association of Austrian Artisans. A member of the National Assembly for several years prior to 1934, he served as Minister of Commerce under Schuschnigg and was deputy president of the Federal Economic Council from 1934-38.

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