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THE WATCH ON THE BRENNER:
A STUDY OF ITALIAN INVOLVEMENT IN
AUSTRIAN FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC AFFAIRS,
1928-1938

by

Frederick R. Zuber

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis Director's Signature:

R. J. Lee

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PREFACE

During the nearly three decades since the conclusion of the Second World War, historians have written numerous volumes in an effort to explain the origins of that struggle. They have examined the events of the 1920's and 30's in great detail, seeking to discover which actions or decisions led to the breakdown of the European order established by the Paris peace settlements and opened the way for Hitler's bid for European conquest. In probing these developments, most writers quite naturally have tended to concentrate their attention on Germany, Great Britain, and France, since these three countries dominated the international landscape during the two decades following the First World War. As a consequence, Italy, the subject of this study, frequently has been relegated to a position of secondary importance. Her foreign policy, when not dismissed as either lacking in direction or nonexistent, usually is described as being closely aligned with that of Nazi Germany. Yet this view of Italian political and diplomatic affairs, as a few recent writers have recognized, rather than illuminating the events of the period, only has clouded our knowledge of the background of the Second World War. Italy, despite her subsequent military blunderings, played a vital role in the developments which preceded that struggle. This study, I hope,
will contribute to a clearer understanding of Italy's actions and policies during the critical interwar period.

This dissertation is concerned with an examination of Italy's involvement in Austrian political and diplomatic affairs during the decade prior to the Austro-German union of March 13, 1938. I have chosen to focus this study on Italy's diplomatic relations with Austria for two reasons. In the first place, the expansion of Italy's influence in Austria constituted an essential part of Mussolini's plans to enhance his country's prestige in international affairs. One of the duce's primary goals on the continent involved the creation of an Italian-dominated bloc in Central Europe. Originally intended as a means of checking the growth of French power in the Danube Basin, this coalition subsequently was envisioned by the Italian leader as the forerunner of a grand alliance of fascist states that would have an important voice in European politics. Because of her location in the heart of Central Europe, Austria obviously was essential to these plans, and the Palazzo Chigi, therefore, sought to influence her domestic and foreign affairs in a manner that was favorable to Italian interests.

The study of Italian policy in Austria is also of importance because it serves to highlight Italian-German relations during the years prior to the formation of the Rome-Berlin Axis. As indicated by their bitter differences over the Austrian Republic, the ties between Italy and Germany were hardly as friendly as is often assumed. Indeed,
Mussolini, in response to the abortive Nazi attempt to over-
throw the Austrian government in July, 1934, played an ac-
tive role in the formation of an Anglo-French-Italian coa-
lation designed to check Hitler's plans for aggression on
the European continent. The collapse of this three-power
alliance marked a significant turning point both in Italian
foreign policy in Austria and in the subsequent course of
events that preceded the Second World War. Italy, as this
study will indicate, was not entirely responsible for the
developments which led to her abandonment of this partner-
ship with Great Britain and France. Nor were her leaders
wholly in favor of the alliance with Nazi Germany which
their own actions, coupled with those of the other European
powers, obliged them to accept. By examining Italy's for-
eign policy in Austria--and of necessity, therefore, her
relations with Germany--it is hoped that this dissertation
will provide a clearer understanding of the factors which
carved her to join with Hitler's Reich to form the Rome-
Berlin Axis.

Italy's involvement in Austrian political and diplo-
matic affairs, as presented in this study, is divided into
three phases. The first, extending from Mussolini's initial
contacts with Austrian rightist paramilitary groups in the
spring of 1928 to the abortive Nazi putsch of July, 1934,
witnessed the expansion of Italian influence in Central Eu-
rope. The duce's efforts to establish a fascist coalition
in that region were brought to a successful conclusion in
March, 1934, when Austria and Hungary joined Italy in signing the Rome Protocols. Mussolini's dreams of Italian preeminence in the Danube Basin were abruptly shattered, however, by the Nazi attempt to seize power in Austria. Shocked by the murder of the Austrian chancellor and fearful of the growth of German preponderance in Central Europe, the duce undertook a radical revision of his country's relations with her European neighbors. During this phase, the Italian foreign office sought to expand its ties with Great Britain and France and to build a Great Power coalition that would check Hitler's aggressive designs on the continent. Although such a partnership was successfully established, it proved to be of only short duration.

Italy's provocation of a war with Ethiopia resulted in her estrangement from both Great Britain and France. Bereft of her allies in Western Europe, Rome once again was compelled to re-examine her European policies. Mussolini's subsequent decision to seek closer ties with Germany initiated the final phase of Italy's involvement in Austrian affairs. The duce's growing dependence on German political and diplomatic support obliged him to recognize German preeminence in Central Europe, thereby opening the way for the Austro-German Anschluss.

In preparing this study, I have received considerable assistance from a number of sources. I would like to express my special appreciation to the Austrian government for granting me access to the documents in the Austrian
state archives (Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv) that were pertinent to my work. I also wish to acknowledge the assistance of the personnel of the National Archives in Washington, D. C., who greatly facilitated my work in selecting those portions of the captured German foreign office records that were used in this dissertation. The staffs of the Austrian National Library in Vienna, the Rice University Library, the University of Rochester Library in Rochester, and the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago were likewise helpful. I am especially grateful for the advice and assistance of Professor Ludwig Jedlicka, director of the Institute for Contemporary History at the University of Vienna, and for the suggestions of Dr. Lajos Kerekes, a member of the Historical Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Particular recognition and thanks are due to Professor R. John Rath, who has patiently guided my work. I am also indebted to the members of Professor Rath's seminar in Modern European History--especially to Gloria Biles, Ronald Hanks, and Arthur Neal Mangham--for their encouragement and suggestions. It goes without saying that while others have made possible many positive qualities of this dissertation, I alone am responsible for its deficiencies.

F. R. Z.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The study of Italy's foreign policy during the decade which preceded the outbreak of the Second World War often has been viewed in light of the apparent close relationship between her fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini, and Germany's National Socialist chancellor, Adolf Hitler. The political and ideological affinities of these two men are considered to have provided a basis for cooperation in international affairs between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. The origins of this Italian-German friendship generally have been traced to Italy's contacts with the National Socialist movement in the 1920's and to her support of Hitler's demands for revision of the Treaty of Versailles in the early 1930's. With the announcement of the Rome-Berlin Axis on November 1, 1936, these ties were greatly expanded, and a succession of agreements was concluded between the two powers which united them in the war years that were to follow.

While it is impossible to deny the close collaboration between Italy and Germany demonstrated by their wartime alliance, the emphasis placed upon this partnership has tended to overshadow the many differences that divided the two countries and to present their relations as being far more amicable than is justified by existing evidence.
Indeed, prior to the events which surrounded the formation of the Rome-Berlin Axis, the political and diplomatic ties between Italy and Germany were often very strained. Despite their mutual desire to "revise" the peace settlements which had ended the First World War, the two countries disagreed as to the exact nature and the extent of these modifications. Dissension also developed between Rome and Berlin concerning their respective economic and political spheres of influence. As a result of these problems, Italian foreign policy before 1936, far from always being in accord with that of Germany, followed a course that was independent of and frequently in opposition to the interests and aims of that country.

Nowhere were these pre-1936 differences in relations between Italy and Germany more clearly manifested than in their respective attitudes toward Austria. For Hitler, the union of the land of his birth with the new German Reich was an essential aim of his foreign policy.¹ Mussolini, on the other hand, had consistently opposed any union of these two German states for more than a decade. In one of his earliest foreign policy speeches to the Italian Senate on May 2, 1925, the duce had declared that "Italy would never tolerate such a patent violation of the treaties [of Versailles and Saint Germain] as the union of Austria and Germany."²


²Muriel Currey, Italian Foreign Policy, 1918-1932
This position was to be reinforced in both word and deed on many subsequent occasions.

Italian interests in Austria, however, went beyond the desire to prevent her union with Germany. For nearly a decade Rome had been attempting to expand her own influence in Central Europe. Austria, because of her strategic geographic location in the heart of the Danube region, naturally was destined to play an important part in these plans, and her continued independence was a prerequisite for the fulfillment of Italian aspirations in that region.

Mussolini's endeavors to advance Italian aims in Austria, as this study will show, followed a very complex course of development. Rome's initial efforts to affect Austrian political and diplomatic affairs were directed toward achieving control over the Heimwehr, a rightist-oriented paramilitary organization. With the assistance of the Heimwehr, the Italian leader was able to exert a decisive influence on the policies of the Austrian government led by Engelbert Dollfuß. Mussolini's activities in Austria, however, eventually brought him into conflict with Hitler. At first, the duce attempted to persuade the German leader to abandon his plans for Austria and to join a fascist coalition.

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in Central Europe. The Nazi assassination of Dollfuß on July 25, 1934, forced the Italian leader to abandon this policy. Rome subsequently turned to Paris and London for assistance in preserving Austria's independence and in checking German expansion in Central and Southeastern Europe. Yet despite an auspicious beginning, the Anglo-French-Italian coalition formed in the spring of 1935 proved to be of little lasting value. The collapse of this alliance once again obliged Mussolini to reexamine his foreign policy. In November, 1936, he opted for closer ties with Germany.

With the conclusion of the Rome-Berlin Axis, the course of Italian foreign policy in Central Europe was dramatically altered. German friendship was purchased at the price of Austrian independence; the Anschluss between Austria and Germany of March 13, 1938, was allowed to pass without Italian objection. This reversal of Italy's foreign policy, however, raises a number of questions concerning the complex factors behind her actions. For this reason, therefore, Italy's involvement in Austrian political and diplomatic affairs during the decade prior to the Austro-German union is deserving of special attention. Before studying these developments in detail, however, it would be useful to examine briefly several of the more general aspects of Italian foreign policy during the interwar period.

Italy's foreign policy during the years between the two world wars was oriented around two general considerations:
her conception of herself as a "Great Power" and her desire to revise the peace treaties that had ended the First World War. Italy had emerged from this struggle as one of the "Great Powers of Europe." Yet, despite the fact that she had been accorded this position by the other allied and associated powers at the peace conferences, she had attained few of the trappings traditionally ascribed to this status. Whereas Great Britain and France had made extensive colonial acquisitions in Africa and the Pacific, Italy was obliged to be content with a few small territorial additions along her northern border and certain minor gains in Africa—concessions which, in Italian eyes, were hardly commensurate with the sacrifices in blood and national wealth that she had made during the conflict. The peace settlements which ended the First World War also compelled Italy to accept a reduction in her territorial expectations along the Adriatic coast of the Balkan peninsula. Instead of acquiring all of what she had been promised in that region by the Treaty of London—Istria and the Istrian Islands, Fiume, portions of Dalmatia and the Dalmatian Islands, portions of Valonia, and a protectorate over the central portion of Albania—she was forced to be satisfied with Istria and the Istrian Islands. The First World War thus

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left Italy with a legacy of unfulfilled promises which were to provide the basis for Mussolini's later expansionistic plans in Africa, the Balkans, and Central Europe.

As a result of this thwarting of her "Great Power" aspirations, Italy's foreign policy quite naturally took on a revisionist outlook during the interwar period. In an effort to satisfy some of her unfulfilled claims, the Palazzo Chigi repeatedly advanced suggestions for adjustments in the Paris peace treaties that would be favorable to Italian interests. Most notable among these were Rome's requests for a share of the mandated territories in Africa and her demands for control over the port city of Fiume. Italy's support of revisionism, however, was not restricted to only those matters which could be narrowly defined as "Italian interests." Taking a rather broad approach to the question of treaty revision, Italian leaders frequently supported German and Hungarian demands for changes in the Paris peace settlements. The Italian position on revisionism was most dramatically expressed by Mussolini in an address to the Italian Senate on June 5, 1928, in which he asserted that "the peace treaties [which had ended the First World War] are not sacrosanct" but were products of "human intelligence, subject, at the end of a gigantic war, to

\[\text{Pellizzi, Italy, pp. 77-79 and 104-107; Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, pp. 143-145 and 161-163.}\]
influences of an exceptional nature." Their revision to fit the altered conditions of postwar Europe, the Italian leader argued, was essential for the maintenance of European peace.

This revisionist thrust of Italian foreign policy soon manifested itself in two areas: in the Adriatic and Eastern Mediterranean region and in the Balkans. A strong position in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic was an essential Italian goal; Italy, her leaders felt, must either dominate the seas which surrounded her or be their prisoner. This meant that she must have a fleet equal to that of any other Mediterranean power. It also lent greater significance to the expansion of Italy's existing Mediterranean colonies and the acquisition of the strategically-located Dodecanese Islands which she had been promised during the war.

Italian involvement in the Balkans was related to her interest in the Adriatic and Eastern Mediterranean. Her

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6 Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, p. 3.

7 Italy acquired "de facto" control of these islands in 1923, and by May, 1924, had complete sovereignty over them. See Alan Cassels, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 43-45 and 299. For additional information concerning Italy's Mediterranean policy in general, see ibid., pp. 2-5.
unfulfilled territorial expectations in that region and the
desire to protect her own vulnerable Adriatic coastline
obliged Italy to keep a watchful eye on political develop-
ments in the Balkans. The danger that a powerful Slav state
might come to dominate the peninsula was of particular con-
cern to Italian leaders. Such a state not only posed a
threat to Italian territorial aspirations in that region
but also could join with her emerging rival, France, there-
by encircling Italy and threatening her position in the
Mediterranean. Thus, although Rome did not desire to ex-
ercise complete control over the entire Balkan peninsula,
she did seek to prevent any other state or combination of
states from achieving preeminence in that region.8

Italian aspirations concerning treaty revision, the
Mediterranean, and the Balkans naturally resulted in a clash
with France, the chief supporter of the European "status
quo." As a result of the Paris peace settlement, France
had achieved her two main foreign policy objectives: the
crippling of her chief European rival, Germany, and the re-
turn of Alsace-Lorraine. She was naturally loath, there-
fore, to countenance any alterations in these arrangements
and sought to block Italian revisionist efforts wherever
possible.

Franco-Italian differences developed along several

8Pellizzi, Italy, p. 91; Macartney and Cremona, Italy's
Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1927, p. 192.
lines. In colonial affairs, the long-standing dispute between the two countries in Tunisia was revived in the mid-1920's, when the French government, in violation of previous agreements with Italy, attempted to force Italian nationals living in that country to assume French citizenship. Naval armaments were another source of irritation between Paris and Rome. French refusal to recognize Italian demands for naval parity added to existing difficulties between the two countries in the late 1920's and threatened to disrupt the London Naval Conference in 1930.10

Probably the most significant area of tension between France and Italy, however, lay in the Balkans and involved French support of an alliance system, composed of Yugoslavia, Romania, and Czechoslovakia, known as the Little Entente. From the French point of view, the alliance system was intended as a safeguard against possible German expansion into Central and Eastern Europe and as a check on any

9 Lothar Egger-Höllwald, Austrian consul in Rome to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, October 31, 1926, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Vienna) (hereafter cited as "Staatsarchiv" [Vienna]), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXX, No. 15,389, Fos. 123 and 125. For additional information on the Tunisian question, see Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, pp. 126-127.

10 Egger-Höllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, January 17, 1930, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXII, No. 25,304, Fos. 32; Egger-Höllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, April 14, 1930, ibid., No. 26,789, Fos. 201; Egger-Höllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, May 1, 1930, ibid., No. 27,031, Fos. 247-248; Villari, Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini, pp. 79-82.
Hungarian revisionist activities. Mussolini, on the other hand, saw the creation of the Little Entente as a French effort to maintain the "status quo" and to block any extension of Italian influence in the Balkans. In response to this challenge to her "Great Power" aspirations, Italy, therefore, moved to undermine the position of the Little Entente and particularly that of its chief Balkan adherent, Yugoslavia.

One of Italy's earliest efforts to subvert Yugoslav and Little Entente ascendancy in the Balkans involved her attempt to extend her control over Yugoslavia's southwestern neighbor, Albania. Because of her strategic location at the entrance to the Adriatic Sea, Albania had always been an important element in Italian plans for the Mediterranean and the Balkans. Rome's influence in Tirana had been rather limited, however, until Ahmed Zogu's rise to power in 1925. With Yugoslavian assistance, Zogu had become President of Albania in January, 1925. Yet when he discovered that he could secure more money and arms from Rome than from Belgrade, Zogu quickly abandoned his Yugoslav supporters.

On November 27, 1926, Italy and Albania concluded a Pact of

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11 Villari, Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini, pp. 27 and 44; Cassels, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy, pp. 77-78.
12 Pellizzi, Italy, p. 92.
13 Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, p. 104; Villari, Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini, p. 49.
Friendship and Security. The agreement, while assuring Albania of Italian support in her relations with her Balkan neighbors, also served to expand Italian influence in Albanian political and diplomatic affairs.  

The conclusion of the Italian-Albanian pact aroused considerable anger and hostility in Belgrade. Since the Yugoslav government also had been working to expand its influence in Albania, it quickly attacked the Italian move as a violation of Italy's earlier promise of friendship in the Italian-Yugoslav Pact of Rome of January, 1924. In an effort to counter the Italian-Albanian action, Belgrade sought to strengthen her ties with France and her Little Entente partners, Romania and Czechoslovakia, and on November 11, 1927, she signed a new Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, as well as a Treaty of Arbitration, with France. Italy responded by concluding a defensive alliance with Albania on November 22, 1927. The lines between Italy

14 Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, pp. 104-106. This agreement is often referred to as the Pact of Tirana.

15 On January 27, 1924, Italian and Yugoslav leaders met in Rome to conclude an Italian-Yugoslav "treaty of friendship" which subsequently became known as the Pact of Rome. The agreement, aside from its function as a friendship pact, settled Italian-Yugoslav differences over Fiume. Italy received the city and port of Fiume, while Port Baros was assigned to Yugoslavia. For more information on this agreement, see ibid., pp. 93-107.

16 Ibid., p. 109; Cassels, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy, pp. 335-336.

17 Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, pp. 109-110; Cassels, Mussolini's Early
and Yugoslavia thus were clearly drawn.

Italian efforts to undermine French and Yugoslav pre-eminence in the Balkans, however, were not confined to her activities in Albania. By early 1926 it would appear that Mussolini was willing to attempt a novel approach to Balkan affairs that involved the creation of a Balkan bloc composed of Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania.\textsuperscript{18} As might be expected, because of their own outlook on revisionism, Hungary and Bulgaria were willing to cooperate in this project. The key problem, then, centered around winning Romanian support for the duce's plan.

Rome's efforts to secure Bucharest's adherence to an Italian-dominated Balkan coalition obviously faced several serious difficulties. Although relations between the two countries were generally friendly during the postwar years, Romania likewise maintained close ties with Italy's chief rival, France, and was a member of the Little Entente. Her relations with Hungary and Bulgaria, the two other members of the proposed bloc, also were fraught with problems as a result of her acquisition of territory with sizable minority populations from both countries at the end of the First World War.\textsuperscript{19} In the spring of 1926, however, these

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{\text{Diplomacy, p. 336.}}
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\textsuperscript{\text{\textsuperscript{18}Cassels, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy, p. 338.}}

\textsuperscript{\text{\textsuperscript{19}Romania acquired the province of Dobrudja from Bulgaria and the provinces of Transylvania and Bukovenia from the Habsburg Monarchy. (Transylvania was governed as part of the Hungarian Crown.) As a result of having acquired}}
difficulties were in part counterbalanced by General Alex-
ander Averescu's rise to power as prime minister of Romania. 
Reputedly a man of fascist inclinations, with an Italophile 
outlook, Averescu began a reorientation of his country's 
foreign policy along lines which, while not anti-French, 
were more favorable toward Italy. As a first step in this 
direction, he accepted Rome's proposals for an Italian-
Romanian Treaty of Friendship, which was signed on Septem-
ber 16, 1926. Mussolini, encouraged by these developments, 
sought to expand Italian-Romanian relations further and to 
secure Averescu's approval of his plans for a Balkan coa-
lition.

In his dealings with the Romanian leader, the duce re-
lied very heavily upon Averescu's pro-fascist and pro-
Italian sympathies in order to win his support for Italian 
plans in the Balkans. As a further incentive, Mussolini 

\[\text{thecsc areas, Romania had within its borders approximately} \]
\[1,380,000 \text{ Magyars, 709,000 Germans, and 248,000 Bulgarians.} \]
\[\text{See Zsombor de Szasz, The Minorities in Roumanian Transyl-
vania (London: The Richards Press, Ltd., 1927), p. 49.} \]

\[\text{20 Cassels, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy, p. 339.} \]

\[\text{21 Indeed, the continued friendly relations between} \]
\[\text{France and Romania were evidenced by the conclusion of a} \]
\[\text{treaty of friendship between them on June 10, 1926. See} \]
\[\text{Arnold J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1926} \]
\[\text{(London: Oxford University Press, 1928), p. 156.} \]

\[\text{22 Ibid., p. 158.} \]

\[\text{23 Cassels, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy, pp. 340-342.} \]

\[\text{24 Ibid., p. 342.} \]
also offered to reopen negotiations concerning Italy's recognition of Romania's claims to Bessarabia, a province which had been taken from Russia and given to her by an Allied commission in 1920.\textsuperscript{25} Italy was the only Western Power that had not recognized Romania's legal title to the province, and Bucharest naturally desired to secure her ratification of the Allied commission's award. In 1924 the Italian foreign office had promised to examine the Bessarabian question and to use its good offices in Moscow to persuade the Soviet Union to accept the loss of the province. Little came of these assurances, and the talks between Rome and Bucharest concerning the fate of Bessarabia were allowed to lapse.\textsuperscript{26}

Following the conclusion of the Italian-Romanian Treaty of Friendship, the Palazzo Chigi privately indicated to the Averescu government that it would be willing to resume discussions concerning Romania's claims to Bessarabia.\textsuperscript{27} The price which Mussolini placed on Italy's recognition of Bucharest's title to the province, however, involved the fulfillment of three demands. Romania was to grant Italy broad economic concessions, to allow the teaching of the Italian language in Romanian secondary schools, and to strive, with Italian assistance, to reach an accord with Hungary and

\textsuperscript{25} For more information on the Bessarabian question, see ibid., pp. 181-182.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., pp. 338-339.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., pp. 240-241.
Bulgaria. This last demand was essential to Italian plans for a Balkan alliance system, and it was also the point which proved to be the stumbling block in the negotiations. Romania, though desirous of Italian recognition of her title to Bessarabia, was loath to awaken Hungarian irredentist claims in Transylvania. Averescu consequently declined the Italian proposals in January, 1927, thereby disrupting the duce's plans for a Balkan bloc.

Romania's rejection of his alliance proposals left Mussolini in an awkward position. As can be seen from the preceding discussion, Yugoslav-Italian and Franco-Italian relations were tense. Mussolini's efforts to expand Italian influence in the Balkans faced serious opposition from both France and the Little Entente. His attempts to create an Italian-Hungarian-Bulgarian-Romanian bloc had failed, leaving him with an only half completed Hungarian-Bulgarian coalition. An alternative course of action, therefore, was necessary, and it appears to have been found in the concept of an Italian-dominated bloc in Central Europe to be composed of Hungary and Austria. Such a combination would aid in the encirclement of Yugoslavia and at the same time also serve to divide the Little Entente. It would be a geographically solid unit that could be used as the basis for further Italian penetration into Central Europe and the

28 Ibid., p. 341.
29 Ibid., pp. 342-343.
Balkans. Of only incidental value at the time, this coalition could also act as a barrier to any German expansion in Central Europe.

Mussolini's endeavors to build an Italian-Hungarian-Austrian alliance system met with warm support in Hungary. Relations between Rome and Budapest had been cordial since the fall of the Hungarian Communist regime under Béla Kun in November, 1919. Pre-fascist Italy's espousal of revisionism had met with a warm response in a country that had lost two-thirds of her territory and one-half of her population as a result of the treaties that had ended the First World War.30 Budapest also viewed closer relations with Rome as a possible means of ending her isolation and encirclement by hostile neighbors,31 and Italy was careful to cultivate this attitude through shipments of food, medical supplies, and illegal arms.32

Italian-Hungarian relations underwent a significant


31 Memorandum by the Austrian consul in Budapest to the Austrian chancellery, Budapest, January 1, 1919, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCCCLXXXIV (Ungarn V/1), No. 1-998, Fos. 4-5.

32 Austrian ministry of military affairs to the Austrian foreign office, Vienna, August 9, 1919, ibid., No. I-5,281, Fos. 29; chief of police to the Austrian foreign office, Vienna, June 25, 1919, ibid., No. I-5,462, Fos. 30-31; Austrian consul in Budapest to the Austrian ministry of military affairs, Budapest, May 29, 1919, ibid., Karton DCCCLXXXIV (Ungarn V/2), No. 4,319, Fos. 426-428; chief of police to the Austrian foreign office, Vienna, June 29, 1920, ibid., No. 2,616, Fos. 429-430.
expansion following Mussolini's rise to power on October 28, 1922. Even before he had become prime minister of Italy, the duce had assured Hungary of his sympathy for her cause. Three Hungarian statesmen who had visited the duce in Milan before October, 1922, were given a written promise that if he came to power he would support Hungarian revisionist claims. Once in power, Mussolini worked to fulfill these promises. The Italian government continued its illegal arms shipments to Hungary and moved to hinder Little Entente investigations of these activities. The Palazzo Chigi also took a favorable attitude concerning the reduction or cancellation of Hungarian war debts to Italy and assisted Budapest in securing a reconstruction loan from the League of Nations in March, 1924.

Close ties between Italy and Hungary, however, were not being forged on official levels alone. In this regard, Stefan Friedrichs' trip to Rome during the last week of February, 1923, is of particular interest. Friedrichs, a member of the Hungarian parliament and a leading figure in


34 Calice, Consul in Budapest, to the Austrian chancellery, Budapest, June 7, 1923, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton XVIII, No. 1,510, Fo. 150.

35 Theodor Hornbostel, member of the consular staff in Budapest, to the Austrian foreign office, Budapest, September 16, 1924, ibid., No. 14,830, Fo. 399; Pellizzi, Italy, pp. 77-78; Currey, Italian Foreign Policy, 1918-1922, p. 155.
the Hungarian Fascist Party, went to Rome to conclude an alliance between the Hungarian and Italian fascist parties. While he was not officially welcomed by members of the Italian government and while his planned alliance appears to have been left incomplete, Friedrichs, nonetheless, was widely received by a number of fascist leaders on an unofficial basis, and his discussions serve as an indication of the lines along which fascists in both Rome and Budapest were thinking. The terms of the proposed alliance included pledges by both parties to work together for the fulfillment of the fascist concept of the Fatherland and to support each other in their struggles against opposition propaganda. The Italian fascists further promised to support Hungarian efforts to revise the territorial clauses of the Treaty of Trianon and to persuade the Italian government to pressure Hungary's neighbors into halting their military activities along her borders. The Hungarians, in return, promised not to undertake a coup against the Hungarian government but to use peaceful methods to fulfill

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36 Calice to the Austrian chancellery, Budapest, March 13, 1923, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton XVIII, No. 804, Fos. 74-79.

37 Friedrichs was a member of the opposition in the Lower House of the Hungarian parliament, and his official reception by Mussolini, it was felt, would have been offensive to the Hungarian government. See ibid., Fo. 74.

38 There were conflicting reports as to whether or not the alliance was actually concluded. Calice seems to feel that it was not concluded, but he was also forced to admit that "the terms of the supposed treaty did not seem to be entirely improbable." See ibid., Fos. 74 and 79.
fascist aims, as exemplified by the Italian Fascist Party.\footnote{Ibid., Fos. 75-77.}

On official levels, relations between Budapest and Rome continued to improve, despite a temporary setback created by the conclusion of the Italian-Yugoslav Fact of Rome in January, 1924.\footnote{The Pact of Rome had an effect on Italian-Hungarian relations in that Italy's signing of a treaty of friendship with Yugoslavia, one of Hungary's opponents in the Balkans, raised doubts as to her reliability as a champion of Hungarian revisionist claims. See Calice to the Austrian foreign office, Budapest, January 24, 1924, ibid., No. 11,460, Fos. 308. For further information on the Pact of Rome, see ante, p. 11, n. 15.} Throughout 1924 and 1925 diplomatic and cultural exchanges were increased and the leaders of both governments repeatedly reaffirmed their mutual friendship.\footnote{Hornbostel to the Austrian foreign office, Budapest, October 2, 1924, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCCCLXXXIV, No. 15,123, Fos. 51-54; Egger-Höllwald to the Austrian foreign office, Rome, October 23, 1924, ibid., No. 15,406, Fos. 56-58; Consul in Budapest to the Austrian foreign office, Budapest, January 24, 1925, ibid., No. 11,400, Fos. 55.} As Italian-Yugoslav and Italian-French relations became more strained in the fall of 1926, Mussolini moved to consolidate his ties with Hungary and to lay the foundation of an Italian-dominated bloc in Central Europe. Towards the end of December, 1926, therefore, he suggested that the long-planned friendship pact between the two countries be concluded.\footnote{Egger-Höllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, January 1, 1927, ibid., Karton LXXX, No. 20,429, Fos. 214-215; Hans von Schoen, German consul in Budapest, to the German foreign office, Budapest, December 31, 1926, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign}
Budapest was happy to comply with the duce’s request for a formal manifestation of the friendly ties between the two countries. A friendship pact with Italy would be a positive indication that Hungary’s isolation and encirclement by the Little Entente had been brought to an end. On April 5, 1927, therefore, Hungarian officials arrived in Rome to conclude an Italian-Hungarian Treaty of Friendship. Aside from reaffirming the long-standing tradition of amity between the two countries, the agreement also provided for close Italian-Hungarian economic cooperation. The possibility also exists that some sort of secret military accord, conceivably directed against Yugoslavia, was concluded.

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Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 4,010, Frames K125,722-K125,723; Von Schoen to the German foreign office, Budapest, January 10, 1927, ibid., Frame K125,725.

43 Rudolf Seemann, member of the staff of the Austrian consulate in Budapest, to the Austrian foreign office, Budapest, April 5, 1927, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCCCLXXIV, No. 21,682, Fos. 77-79.


45 Hungarian privileges in Fiume were of special concern. See Calice to the Austrian chancellery, Budapest, May 4, 1927, ibid., Karton DCCCLXXXIV, No. 22,173, Fos. 109-116.

46 Diplomatic sources appear to be divided over whether or not any military agreements were concluded between Italy and Hungary. As might be expected under these circumstances, Italian and Hungarian sources denied the existence of any military accords, while Czech, Romanian, and Yugoslav sources
The close ties that had been established between Italy and Hungary by the spring of 1927 thus provided a firm foundation for Mussolini's plans for an Italian-dominated bloc in Central Europe. Yet this alliance system was obviously incomplete since no direct link existed between the two countries. The inclusion of Austria in this Italian-Hungarian coalition was the most logical course for Mussolini to follow. The long-standing hostility between Rome and Vienna, however, made this path exceedingly difficult.

Austro-Italian relations during the decade after the close of the First World War followed a rather erratic course. Italy's sympathetic response to Austria's economic plight during the immediate postwar period—her shipping of food and other necessary supplies to that country—won her a limited amount of friendship from the Austrian people. The Italian government also played a significant role in

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47Pellizzi, Italy, p. 77; Malcolm Bullock, Austria, 1918-1938. A Study in Failure (London: Macmillan and Co., 1939), p. 21
securing an important economic loan for Austria from the League of Nations in August, 1922. Indeed, on the occasion of his visit to Verona on August 24, 1922, to discuss Austro-Italian economic problems and the upcoming debates in the League of Nations concerning her loan request, Austria's chancellor, Monsignor Ignaz Seipel, went so far as to suggest the creation of an Austro-Italian customs union as one possible solution to his country's economic difficulties. The proposal, though coolly received by Italy at the time, was revived a year later by Mussolini during his talks with Seipel in Rome on March 29 through April 3, 1923 and is an indication of one possible course that Austro-Italian relations might have followed.

Yet, despite the apparent favorable beginnings made as a result of the economic cooperation between the two countries, relations between Vienna and Rome soon foundered on the problem of Italy's treatment of the German minority.

48 Seipel was chancellor of Austria from May, 1922, to November, 1924, and from October, 1926, to May, 1929.


50 Von Neurath to the German foreign office, Rome, August 27, 1922, ibid., Frames K124,024-K124,026; Von Neurath to the German foreign office, Rome, September 2, 1922, ibid., Frames K124,029-K124,030.

51 Maximilian Pfeiffer, a member of the German consulate staff in Vienna, to the German foreign office, Vienna, April
living in the Alto Adige, or South Tyrol. Italy had acquired the province from Austria as a result of the Treaty of Saint Germain. The region was essential to her because it completed her strategic frontiers, but it also brought over 200,000 Germans under Italian rule. The absorption of this sizable minority was no easy task, especially considering the obstreperous activities of the German minority in protesting its "Germanism."

In early 1923, Ettore Tolomei, a member of the Italian Senate of pronounced nationalist views, was put in charge of the "Italianization" of the Alto Adige. The use of Italian in secondary schools was made compulsory and German schools in the province were discriminated against. German nationalist groups naturally protested the action, and the Landtag of the Austrian Tyrol unanimously voted to request that the federal government in Vienna bring the plight of the German minority in the Alto Adige to the attention of the League of Nations. Due to her unstable economic condition and her dependence upon international economic aid, however, Austria was unable at the time to support the cause of the German minority in Italy. Seipel, in an effort to calm the situation, both publicly and privately condemned the excesses of the German nationalists in Italy.

6, 1923, ibid., Frames K124,121-K124,124.

52 Cassels, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy, p. 272.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., pp. 272-273.
At the same time, he also pleaded with Rome to moderate its program. Italy, however, demonstrated very little sympathy for Austrian feelings and curtly informed Vienna that educational policy in the Alto Adige was an Italian internal matter.

The Alto Adige question continued as a barrier to closer ties between Rome and Vienna throughout the remainder of the decade. Despite attempts to circumvent the issue by efforts at closer economic cooperation, Austro-Italian talks continually returned to the problem of Italy's treatment of her German minority. A temporary respite was achieved in October, 1926, when Mussolini informed Vienna that he planned to allow the teaching of German in the secondary schools of the Alto Adige. Italy's failure to fulfill this promise and her continued discrimination against Germans living in the province, however, resulted in the resumption of the polemical and press feuds between the two.

55Ibid., p. 273.
56Ibid.
57No resolution of this issue was achieved until the conclusion of the Austro-Italian friendship treaty under Chancellor Johannes Schober's administration on February 3, 1930. See Currey, Italian Foreign Policy, 1918-1932, pp. 280-281.
58Von Neurath to the German foreign office, Rome, April 15, 1925, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 4,008, Frames K124,143-K124,144.
59Egger-Höllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, October 7, 1926, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXX, No. 14,917, Fo. 78.
countries in late 1927 and early 1928. The turmoil reached a peak with Seipel's speech of February 17, 1928, in which he severely criticized Italian policies in the region. 60

The renewed dispute over the Alto Adige question in late 1927 made it clear to governing circles in Rome that their plans for a Central European coalition would have little chance of success in Vienna. Yet steps had to be taken to secure the lines of communication between Rome and Budapest, as was made poignantly clear as a result of the seizure of a secret Italian arms shipment to Hungary by Austrian customs officials at Saint Gotthard on the evening of January 1, 1928. 61 Since Italy could not achieve her objectives through official channels, she was forced to turn to unofficial sources in order to win support in Austria for her plans for an Italian-dominated bloc in Central Europe. Foremost among these other sources of support was to be a rightist-oriented, paramilitary force known as the Heimwehr.

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60 Neue Freie Presse, February 18, 1928 (Morgenblatt), pp. 1-2; Currey, Italian Foreign Policy, 1918-1932, pp. 220-221; Pellizzi, Italy, p. 113; Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, p. 149.

61 The provincial government for the Burgenland to the Austrian chancellery, Sauerbrunn, January 14, 1928, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton CMXII (Ungarn 9/14), No. 20, 248, Fo. 645.
CHAPTER II
MUSSOLINI AND THE HEIMWEHR

During its initial phases the expansion of Italian influence in Austrian political and diplomatic affairs was closely associated with the development of friendly ties between Italy and the Austrian Heimwehr. A collection of rightist-oriented, self-defense groups, the Heimwehr had developed spontaneously throughout Austria during the turbulent period which followed the conclusion of the First World War. Largely drawn from the peasantry and the urban middle class, these self-defense groups sought to check the disorders and the threat to property created by the activities of marauding soldiers and unemployed industrial workers. Originally small in numbers, the Heimwehr formations grew rapidly in the immediate postwar years, and, under the leadership of ex-army officers, many of them developed into tightly organized, paramilitary formations.¹

Due to the lack of any strong, centralized leadership and to the differing political viewpoints found among its

members, the early history of the Heimwehr is exceedingly complex. Initially, the organization remained just what its name implied—a self-defense force. Indeed, in 1919 the lack of a well defined ideological orientation made it possible for the Heimwehr on several occasions to collaborate with its future archenemy, the socialist worker's paramilitary groups, in an effort to preserve domestic order and to ward off foreign invasion. Heimwehr and socialist groups fought side by side to suppress disorders in several Austrian cities and to defend the province of Carinthia when it was invaded by Yugoslav partisan groups in April, 1919. The victories achieved by the self-defense groups in that province provided significant impetus to the Heimwehr movement and eventually supplied the organization with one of its earliest legends.

Beginning in 1920, however, the Heimwehr began to assume a pronounced anti-leftist orientation as a result of its association with conservative political, business, and financial interests. Through the contribution of substantial sums of money, these groups sought to purchase the Heimwehr's assistance in suppressing the socialist workers' organizations. More significantly, the newly established

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4 Ibid., p. 7.
rightist governments in Bavaria and Hungary also began to take an interest in Heimwehr affairs. Fearful of a socialist regime in Austria, they aided the Heimwehr in its preparations to overthrow the coalition government led by the Social Democratic chancellor Karl Renner.⁵

While endeavors to aid the Heimwehr in its putsch plans proved to be of only limited value,⁶ Bavarian rightist leaders were more successful in their efforts to consolidate the leadership of the several provincial Heimwehr groups. In early 1920 close ties were established between several Heimwehr leaders and Dr. Georg Escherich, the leader of the Einwohnerwehren, the Bavarian counterpart of the Heimwehr.⁷ Escherich directed an aide, Rudolf Kanzler, to unite the more than fifty-five local Heimwehr groups into a centralized organization. At a meeting in Munich on July 25, 1920, Heimwehr leaders from all over Austria agreed to accept Bavarian leadership.⁸ With the assistance of German


⁶The planned putsch was never executed, due to internal disunity within the leadership of the Heimwehr. See Edmondson, "The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics, 1918-1934," p. 7.


⁸Edmondson, "The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics, 1918-
technical advisors and with money from Bavaria and Hungary, Kanzler subsequently achieved considerable success in his efforts to further expand and consolidate the Austrian Heimwehr. These activities were brought to an abrupt halt, however, following the dissolution of Escherich's Einwohnerwehren in June, 1921, and the suspension of Hungarian contributions to the Heimwehr as a result of Austro-Hungarian differences over the Burgenland.

Though a setback to Heimwehr unity, the collapse of Kanzler's organization was not fatal to the movement. Indeed, in the summer of 1922 the Heimwehr found a new patron in the person of Monsignor Ignaz Seipel, the Christian Social chancellor of Austria. In an effort to build a reliable paramilitary force that could be used to support his government, Seipel worked with Richard Steidle and Captain Waldemar Pabst, the leaders of the powerful Tyrolian Heimwehr, to restore the organization's unity. Much to his


9Roper, member of the staff of the German consulate in Vienna, to the German foreign office, Vienna, September 17, 1920, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 4,497, Frames K233,062-K233,065; Frederic Hans von Rosenberg, German minister in Vienna, to the German foreign office, Vienna, October 21, 1920, ibid., Frames K233,085-K233,093; Rosenberg to the German foreign office, Vienna, December 11, 1920, ibid., Frames K233,097-K233,099.


11Clifton Earl Edmondson, "Early Heimwehr Aims and
regret, the Austrian chancellor soon found that the Heimwehr was not as pliable as he had expected. When its leaders began to object to the terms of the League of Nations loan for Austria concluded in October, 1922,\textsuperscript{12} and to demand a greater voice in the government, Seipel decided to break off his connections with the Heimwehr and instructed his business and financial associates to do likewise.\textsuperscript{13}

Following the severance of its ties with the Seipel government, the Heimwehr entered a period of decline which lasted from the spring of 1923 until early 1927. Differences among the regional leaders of the movement made it difficult to formulate a common program. It must also be noted that the years from 1923 through 1926 were relatively peaceful for Austria. Admittedly economic conditions were not particularly good; however, order had been restored, and most Austrians had adapted themselves to their postwar situation. Under these relatively tranquil circumstances, the Heimwehr could do little more than work to consolidate its membership, attempt to unite its leadership, and wait for an opportunity to assert what it considered to be its

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 122. For additional information on the Geneva Loan of October, 1922, see Ball, Post-War German-Austrian Relations: The Anschluß Movement, pp. 43-50; MacDonald, The Republic of Austria, 1918-1934, pp. 5-6.

\textsuperscript{13} Edmondson, "Early Heimwehr Aims and Activities," pp. 122-123.
rightful preeminence in Austrian affairs.\textsuperscript{14}

Circumstances soon allowed for a resurgence of Heimwehr activities. In early November, 1926, a congress of the Social Democratic Party, meeting in Linz, approved a rather controversial program which alarmed conservative groups in Austria. Though hardly as radical as portrayed by its opponents, the Linz Program contained a number of statements which caused moderates to believe that the Social Democrats were planning to abolish all class distinctions and to institute a socialist regime in Austria.\textsuperscript{15} In response to this move by the socialists, the leaders of the Heimwehr held their own meeting in Klagenfurt on January 30, 1927. During his talks with other Heimwehr leaders, Steidle succeeded in convincing most of the provincial delegates to join together under his leadership.\textsuperscript{16} The Tyrolian leader then proceeded to deliver a vitual "declaration of war" against


the Social Democrats, attacking their terroristic tactics and calling upon all anti-socialist groups to unite to block the "planned Marxist-Bolshevist domination" of Austria. 17

The "war" against the Social Democrats which Steidle had called for on January 30, 1927, did not take long to erupt. By coincidence, on the same day he delivered his address at Klagenfurt, violence flared up between the Heimwehr and the Schutzbund, the Social Democratic paramilitary organization, in the small town of Schattendorf. As a result of an exchange of gunfire between the two groups, a disabled war veteran and a youth were killed. 18 Initially viewed by the public as a relatively insignificant clash, the incident assumed greater importance on July 14, 1927, when the Heimwehr members accused of the killings were acquitted by a court in Vienna. Outraged by the verdict, large numbers of workers took to the streets in a violent three day riot which resulted in considerable property damage and the burning of the Palace of Justice. Police, special troops, and even Heimwehr units had to be called in to suppress the fighting, which resulted in 84 deaths and 256

17 Gustav Horst Fritz Wendschuch, German consul in Klagenfurt, to Rosenberg, Klagenfurt, February 1, 1927, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 4, 497, Frames K233, 196-K233, 199.

arrests.¹⁹

For the Heimwehr, the tragedy of mid-July, 1927, marked one of the most important triumphs of its history. Overnight, the movement was thrust into the national limelight, and money and volunteers once again became plentiful.²⁰ Unknown to its leaders at the time, but of greater significance for the future, the events of July, 1927, also received considerable attention in Italy. In commenting on these developments to the Austrian envoy in Rome, Lothar Egger-Hüllwald, Mussolini voiced his relief that the Austrian government had been able to suppress the socialist demonstrations and went on to indicate that he was "very pleased" with the subsequent expansion of the Heimwehr.²¹

Mussolini's expressed interest in the Heimwehr marked the beginning of a significant new phase in both the development of that organization and the expansion of Italian influence in Austria. Although Rome kept itself informed about Heimwehr activities, Italian contacts with Austrian paramilitary groups previously had been very limited.


²¹Egger-Hüllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, December 10, 1927, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCLXXVIII (Italien 5/5), No. 25,733.
Beginning in the spring of 1928, however, these contacts were greatly expanded. Mussolini's urgent need to find a means of influencing Austrian policy in a manner favorable to his plans for an Italian-dominated bloc in Central Europe caused him to take a closer look at the Heimwehr. Due to its internal divisions, the movement clearly presented a number of difficulties for the fascist leader, but its rightist orientation and its need for funds and arms promised to make it a pliable tool for the expansion of Italian interests in Austria.

The suggestion that the Heimwehr might serve as a useful instrument of Italian policy appears to have been first made by Count István Bethlen, the minister-president of Hungary, during his secret talks with Mussolini in Milan on April 4-6, 1928. Naturally, the Hungarian minister-president had very definite reasons of his own for favoring assistance to the Heimwehr. The establishment of a rightist-oriented government in Austria would help free Hungary from hostile encirclement by the Little Entente and would provide her with a physical link to Italy. Austro-Hungarian differences over the Burgenland also might be amiably settled in a manner more favorable to Budapest's wishes. Most significantly, a Heimwehr-dominated government in Vienna would halt certain unfavorable trends in Austria's

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foreign policy. In Bethlen's opinion, Seipel had recently been following a pro-Czech policy, in that he seemed to favor Eduard Beneš' plans for a Central European economic federation. Because such a bloc could thwart Hungarian revisionist aspirations, it had to be defeated, and a Heimwehr-dominated government in Vienna appeared to provide a suitable means for achieving this goal.23

In discussing these ideas with Mussolini, Bethlen took care to point out the advantages that this plan could have for Italy. The Hungarian leader noted that a rightist-oriented government would be likely to raise few objections concerning Italian policy in the Alto Adige, thereby allowing Rome to complete her "Italianization" of that region. He further insisted that the danger of an Anschluß between Austria and Germany would also be lessened, since a Heimwehr government in Vienna would be unlikely to join in a union with the Social Democratic government then in power in Berlin.24 As a final consideration, Bethlen suggested that a rightist government in Austria probably would look favorably upon Mussolini's plans for an Italian-dominated bloc in Central Europe and might be willing to join in an alliance


24 Ibid.
with Italy and Hungary against France and the Little Entente.\textsuperscript{25}

Mussolini did not immediately respond to Bethlen's suggestions during their first meeting on April 4. Two days later during their second conference, however, the Italian leader gave his approval to the Hungarian minister-president's proposals. Italy would supply the Heimwehr with the one million lira it needed to carry out its current plans to infiltrate the police, the army, and the civil government. Mussolini also promised to supply the Heimwehr with any weapons it might need from the stocks of old Austrian equipment taken by the Italian army at the end of the First World War.\textsuperscript{26} Bethlen, because of his connections with the Heimwehr, was to serve as intermediary, insuring that these funds and arms would go to those groups within the Heimwehr that would be most favorably inclined toward Italian and Hungarian interests.\textsuperscript{27}

Upon his return to Budapest, the Hungarian minister-president discussed his talks in Milan with his foreign minister, Lajos Walkó, and his state secretary, Baron Gábor Apor. In examining the Heimwehr situation, these three men decided that their aims could be best achieved if they worked through the Tyrolian wing of the Heimwehr under Steidle. The other major group, the Styrian Heimwehr under

\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{26}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{27}Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, p. 10.
Walter Pfrimer, was strongly Pan-German and favored an Austro-German customs union, a program decidedly at variance with Italian and Hungarian interests. General Béla Jánky, attached to the Hungarian consulate in Vienna, was selected to serve as Bethlen's liaison with Steidle.

General Jánky established contact with Steidle shortly after the Bethlen-Mussolini talks in Milan, and on May 23, 1928, he transmitted to Budapest a memorandum by the Tyrolian leader which outlined the Heimwehr's basic needs. Steidle requested that 524,000 schillings be turned over to the Heimwehr immediately to meet the current operating budget of the provincial organizations and to provide funds for a press campaign in favor of constitutional reform. An additional 970,000 schillings subsequently was to be given to the Heimwehr to cover future expenses. Steidle also asked for 18,000 rifles, 5.4 million rounds of ammunition, and 190 machine guns with which to arm new Heimwehr formations.

Shortly after the arrival of his memorandum in Budapest, Steidle met with Bethlen in the Hungarian capital in early


31 *Ibid*.

32 *Ibid*. 
June, 1928. The Heimwehr leader outlined the structure and program of his organization to his host and discussed certain general plans for overthrowing the Austrian government. In reply to Bethlen's question as to how soon the Heimwehr could be prepared to undertake such action, Steidle suggested that he might be ready in the fall of 1928, provided the necessary funds and arms could be made available.33 Bethlen, in turn, informed Steidle that he had been in contact with Mussolini and that the Heimwehr could count on Italian as well as on Hungarian assistance. Of course, in the event of a Heimwehr victory, Italy expected that the resultant Austrian government would not interfere in the Alto Adige question—a proviso which the Heimwehr leader agreed to accept.34 Bethlen then forwarded Steidle's memorandum, along with a report of his recent talks with the Heimwehr leader, to Rome on June 15, 1928. Shortly thereafter Mussolini assured him that Italy would be able to fulfill the Heimwehr's request.35

Difficulties arose in Rome, however, concerning Steidle's promise to recognize the Alto Adige question as purely an Italian internal matter. On June 25, 1928, Dino

33 Memorandum by Baron Gábor Apor concerning the talks between Steidle and Bethlen, Budapest, June 8, 1928, ibid., pp. 312-313.
34 Ibid.
Grandi, the Italian foreign minister, informed the Hungarian envoy in Rome that the Italian government demanded a formal declaration from Steidle that he would accept Italian demands concerning the Alto Adige as a precondition for further Italian aid to the Heimwehr.\(^{36}\) Bethlen, upon reading the Italian note, hurriedly informed Rome that Steidle could never accept such a proposal, since it would alienate a large portion of his following. Instead, the Hungarian leader suggested that Steidle write a confidential letter, pledging that if he came to power, his government would abstain from any action in the Alto Adige matter.\(^{37}\) Mussolini subsequently approved this proposal, and on August 1, 1928, Steidle sent the necessary written pledge to Budapest, where it was forwarded to Rome.\(^{38}\) Shortly thereafter Italian funds and arms began to flow into the Austrian Heimwehr.

Italy and Hungary naturally expected that their assistance to the Heimwehr would result in the eventual establishment of a rightist-oriented government in Austria. In accordance with this desire, Steidle discussed proposals for a putsch with Bethlen during their meeting in early June.


\(^{37}\) Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, p. 19.

1928. These talks were renewed on July 28, 1928, when Steidle met Bethlen at Plattensee. The Heimwehr leader suggested October 7, 1928, as a possible date for staging a major Heimwehr demonstration in Wiener Neustadt. Because the city was a socialist stronghold and because the Social Democrats were planning to hold a rally there on the same day, there was likely to be a clash between the two groups which would serve as a test of strength for the Heimwehr. Such a confrontation, the Heimwehr leader hinted, might even lead to a "march on Vienna" and the establishment of a Heimwehr government. Bethlen assured his guest of Hungarian and Italian assistance and promised to supply him with the needed funds and arms.

Aside from securing Italian and Hungarian assistance for his proposed putsch, Steidle also sought to win tacit approval for his plans within Austrian government circles. Seipel, as noted earlier, had at one time supported the Heimwehr, and--so Steidle felt--might be willing to do so again. At a meeting between Seipel and a group of Heimwehr leaders held in late August or early September, 1928,

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39 Memorandum by Apor concerning the talks between Steidle and Bethlen, Budapest, June 8, 1928, Kerekes, "Akten zu den geheimer Verbindungen," pp. 312-313.

40 Memorandum by Apor concerning the meeting between Steidle and Bethlen, Fonyód-bőlatalep, July 28, 1928, ibid., pp. 215-316; Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, pp. 21-22.

Steidle secured the Austrian chancellor's approval for his rally on October 7, and even won his assurance that if this demonstration should lead to an outbreak of violence between the Schutzbund and the Heimwehr the government would intervene on behalf of the latter. Seiple, however, requested that in the event of violence the Social Democrats be made to appear at fault.42

The events of October 7, 1928, proved to be a serious disappointment for both the Heimwehr and its Italian and Hungarian supporters. Contrary to Steidle's expectations, no significant clash occurred between the Heimwehr and the Schutzbund. Over 5,000 police and troops kept the 19,000 Heimwehr marchers separated from the more than 38,000 socialist demonstrators.43 Yet, while the failure of its October 7 rally marked a serious setback for the Heimwehr, it was not a total defeat. Steidle had proven that his organization could carry its propaganda campaign into the heart of a Social Democratic stronghold.44 Influenced by this


43 Count Hugo Lerchenfeld, German envoy in Vienna, to the German foreign office, Vienna, October 4, 1928, National Archives (Washington, D. C.) Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 4, 497; Frame K233,248; Lerchenfeld to the German foreign office, Vienna, October 8, 1928, ibid., Frames K233,245-K233,247.


The Heimwehr's efforts to establish a rightist government in Austria, however, suffered several temporary setbacks following the events of October 7, 1928. On April 3, 1929, Seipel resigned as chancellor of Austria, thereby removing from power a major supporter of the Heimwehr. Seipel's successor, Ernst von Streeruwitz, viewed paramilitary formations in a much different light than had his predecessor,\footnote{Indeed, Streeruwitz had gone so far as to suggest that the Heimwehr and similar paramilitary groups were a danger to the state. See Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, p. 35.} and on several occasions clashes occurred between the new chancellor and the leaders of the Heimwehr.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 40-41; Edmondson, "The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics, 1918-1934," pp. 104-106.}

These difficulties notwithstanding, the Heimwehr continued to receive aid from Italy and Hungary. Indeed, in August, 1929, Steidle received 1,420,000 lira from Rome to help meet the Heimwehr's current expenses and to finance a putsch that the organization was planning against the Streeruwitz government.\footnote{The putsch was to be staged in conjunction with a mass demonstration planned for September 29, 1929. When Schober succeeded Streeruwitz as chancellor, the putsch was cancelled, although the demonstration was still held. See}
Streeruwitz resigned on September 26, 1929.

The collapse of the Streeruwitz government resulted in the creation of a "cabinet of personalities" headed by Johannes Schober. This change of leadership was jubilantly received in Heimwehr circles and even drew favorable attention in Rome. Heimwehr leaders viewed Schober virtually as one of their own; he had campaigned with them against Streeruwitz and had taken a favorable outlook toward their activities during the socialist riots of July, 1927. Indeed, relations between Schober and the Heimwehr were so close that it had been suggested that Steidle might be invited to join the government. Although such an invitation was never issued, Karl Vaugoin, who was known for his pro-Heimwehr sympathies, was appointed to the office of vice-chancellor in addition to his earlier post as minister of war. Franz Stama, a Heimwehr leader from Upper Austria, also became minister of justice and acted as liaison between the government and Steidle.

Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, pp. 41-43.

Calice to General Secretary Wilhelm Peter, Budapest, September 28, 1929, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton XIX, No. 24,096, Fo. 148; Egger-Hölwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, October 3, 1929, ibid., Karton LXXXI, No. 24,176, Fo. 714-715; Egger-Hölwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, October 18, 1929, ibid., No. 24,373, Fo. 720-721.


Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, p. 50; Edmondson, "The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics, 1918-1934,"
Schober's political program and his views on constitutional reform provided the Heimwehr and its Italian and Hungarian supporters with additional reasons to be pleased with the new government. The chancellor gave the Heimwehr's suggestions for changes in the Austrian constitution a generous hearing and promised to support most of its demands. Indeed, the government's proposed constitutional reforms of October 18, 1929, satisfied most of the Heimwehr's important desires: the powers of the federal president were to be increased to include the issuing of emergency decrees; the authority of the military and the police was to be expanded at the expense of local governments; the city of Vienna was to be deprived of its special status as a separate province; and the upper house of the Austrian parliament was to be transformed into a council consisting of representatives from the provinces and the various occupational groups.

As a result of these alterations, it was anticipated that the Austrian government would assume a decidedly authoritarian appearance and that the power of the Social Democratic opposition would be reduced in both national and provincial politics.

pp. 119-120.


While he accepted the Heimwehr's demands for constitutional change, Schober also recognized that the odds for securing passage of these reforms were not good. Socialist opposition could be expected, and, unless he accepted some sort of compromise, the chancellor anticipated that his legislation would fail to secure the necessary two-thirds majority in parliament. The Social Democrats also recognized the need for compromise. The Austrian public appeared to favor constitutional reform, and the Social Democratic leaders felt that they could not successfully block this demand for change indefinitely. Consequently, a compromise bill was introduced in parliament in late November and approved on December 7, 1929. The new reforms allowed for the strengthening of the federal presidency but did not include any of the other measures desired by the Heimwehr.

As might be expected, this compromise legislation infuriated the Heimwehr. Leaders of that organization loudly protested the fact that they had been excluded from the talks which had drawn up the new constitutional reform proposals and threatened to withdraw their support from the government. Demonstrations were staged in an effort to

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54 Schober needed a number of Social Democratic votes to pass his legislation in parliament. The Social Democrats, however, had come out strongly opposed to the legislation as it stood. See Edmondson, "The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics, 1918-1934," p. 127.

55 Ibid., pp. 134-135.

pressure Schober into discarding the compromise legislation in favor of the Heimwehr's earlier proposals. The Austrian chancellor refused to be moved by these pressures, however, and acted to counter efforts to undermine his government. Austrian business groups were told that the activities of the Heimwehr could hurt Austria's economy by weakening foreign confidence in her government and were advised to reduce their financial support of that organization. The chancellor further threatened to take stern legal action against some of the organization's leaders if the Heimwehr refused to halt its opposition to the government.

Schober also realized that in order to check the Heimwehr's influence he would have to deal with its foreign supporters, Italy and Hungary. Therefore, he sought to expand his ties with both Rome and Budapest. In Italy these efforts met with few difficulties; as previously noted, the Italian government had looked favorably upon Schober since his rise to power in September, 1929. Mussolini demonstrated his support for the new chancellor by assisting Austria in acquiring a new development loan from the League of Nations


58 Schober specifically threatened to deport Pabst, a German citizen, if he continued his anti-government activities. Pabst was, in fact, deported on June 14, 1930. See Edmondson, "The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics, 1918-1934," pp. 133 and 165-169; and Pauley, Hahnenschwanz und Hakenkreuz, p. 72.
in December, 1929, and by backing her position on reparations at the Hague Conference in January, 1930. The Italian leader also indicated his support of Schober by ignoring the Heimwehr's pleas for additional assistance and by reducing his financial aid to that organization.

Austro-Italian relations were further strengthened by Schober's trip to Rome on February 3-7, 1930. Officially, the visit served to thank the Italian government for its support during the recent League of Nations loan negotiations and at the Hague Conference. In reality, however, the talks primarily centered around the Alto Adige question and the Heimwehr. Desirous of securing Italian support for his regime, Schober indicated his willingness to accept the Italian position concerning the Alto Adige. The Austrian chancellor then proceeded to outline Austria's internal

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59 Egger-Hülswald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, December 15, 1929, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCLIV (Italien I/1), No. 25, 270.

60 These talks resulted in the elimination of Austria's remaining reparations obligations, most of which were owed to Italy. See Bullock, Austria, 1918-1938, p. 197; and Hellmut Andics, Der Staat den Keiner Wollte, Österreich, 1918-1938 (Vienna: Verlag Herder, 1962), p. 260.

61 Memorandum by Gerhard Köpke, Department II, Berlin, December 4, 1929, National Archives (Washington, D.C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 4, Frames K233,343-K233,344; German ambassador in Rome to the German foreign office, Rome, September 5, 1929, ibid., Frames K233,309-K233,310.

62 Austrian foreign office to embassies abroad, Vienna, February 10, 1930, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCLIV (Italien I/III), No. 25,358, Po. 397; Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, p. 66.
situation and to describe his current difficulties with the Heimwehr. Portraying that organization as a body "with many heads," he urged upon the Italian leader the necessity of restraining the Heimwehr's activities in light of Austria's delicate domestic and international situation. Heimwehr agitation had upset many foreign investors and undermined foreign confidence in the Austrian government. Mussolini appears to have been won over to this position, and in part to indicate his support of Schober, the duce concluded an Austro-Italian Friendship Treaty on February 6, 1930.

Italy's support of the Schober government was reaffirmed during Mussolini's talks with Bethlen in Rome on April 11-12, 1930. In discussing the recent Austro-Italian meeting with the Hungarian minister-president, the Italian leader indicated that the Austrian chancellor had made a very favorable impression on him. Although he had no intention of discontinuing his assistance to the Heimwehr, the duce insisted that its leaders should be made to work with the

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63 Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, p. 66.

64 Ibid.

65 This treaty was finally ratified on June 24, 1930. The text of the agreement can be found in Egger-Höllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, June 27, 1930, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXII, No. 28,182, Fos. 311-313.

Schober government rather than against it. Mussolini noted that the Austrian chancellor had promised to recognize Italian interests in the Alto Adige and had made efforts to establish a rightist government in Austria. Further Heimwehr agitation could only upset this favorable situation. The Italian leader also informed his Hungarian counterpart of Italy's plans to expand her economic contacts with Austria and went on to discuss the possibilities for closer Italian-Hungarian economic cooperation.

Italian and Hungarian efforts to restrain the activities of the Heimwehr and to persuade its leadership to cooperate with the Schober government encountered serious difficulties because of the unstable conditions within the paramilitary organization. Significant divisions existed among the leaders of the Heimwehr in regard to whether to maintain the movement's existing ties with the Christian Social Party or to establish a separate political party. Steidle, a supporter of the former viewpoint, sought to maintain the Heimwehr's unity by preparing a statement of

67 Ibid.

68 Austro-Italian economic relations had been part of the Schober-Mussolini talks. See Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, p. 67. Concerning Italian-Hungarian talks, see Egger-Hölzlwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, April 14, 1930, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCCCLXXXIV, No. 26, 790, Fos. 231-232; and Currey, Italian Foreign Policy, p. 282.

principles, subsequently known as the Korneuberg Oath, which was approved by a meeting of the organization’s leadership at Korneuberg on May 24, 1930.\footnote{Wiener Zeitung, May 20, 1930, p. 12. See also Ludwig Jedlicka, "Zur Vorgeschichte des Korneuberger Eides," Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur, Vol. VIII (1963), No. 4, pp. 149-152; and Edmondson, "The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics, 1918-1934," p. 155.} Though strongly phrased so as to please the right wing of the Heimwehr, the pronouncement actually favored Steidle’s moderate position in that it opposed the organization’s involvement in parliamentary politics and the creation of a separate political party. It thereby implicitly supported the continuation of the movement’s existing ties with the Christian Socials.

The Korneuberg Oath proved to be a major disaster for its supporters. Instead of ending the Heimwehr’s internal problems, it only increased them. Immediately following its publication, the oath was denounced by a number of Heimwehr leaders, including Pabst, Julius Raab, the head of the Lower Austrian Heimwehr, and Prince Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg, the leader of the Upper Austrian Heimwehr.\footnote{Schuschnigg, The Brutal Takeover, p. 55; Pauley, Hahnenchwanz und Hakenkreuz, p. 76.} The radical phraseology of the pronouncement also aroused opposition from the government, the business community, and the Heimwehr’s foreign supporters. Heimwehr leaders subsequently found that the government would no longer permit their illegal activities and that neither the business community...
nor their Italian and Hungarian supporters were willing to finance their plans.  

The Heimwehr's financial situation and its internal divisions finally produced a leadership crisis in the fall of 1930. No longer able to master the situation, Steidle was forced to step down at a meeting of the organization's regional leaders at Schladming on September 2, 1930. In the vote which followed, Starhemberg secured a majority and emerged as the head of the Austrian Heimwehr.  

A member of the moderate wing of the organization, Starhemberg was in a better position than Steidle to unite the divergent interests within the paramilitary formation. At the same time, his many connections with the leaders of the Christian Social Party provided an opportunity for closer cooperation with the government.

Of equal importance were the friendly ties that existed between Starhemberg and Mussolini, as demonstrated by Italy's support of the prince during his struggle to secure the leadership of the Heimwehr.  


\footnote{The Italians supplied Starhemberg with certain vital information concerning Italian-Heimwehr financial ties which Starhemberg used as a lever to overthrow Steidle. They also were careful on several occasions to indicate...}
assisting Starhemberg were quite simple: Italy had a considerable financial investment in the Heimwehr and could not afford to discontinue her support of that organization entirely. Yet in its recent struggles with Schober, the Heimwehr had acted contrary to Italian wishes. A shift in the movement's leadership, therefore, was necessary, and Starhemberg, a member of the moderate wing of the movement, appeared to be a suitable candidate.\textsuperscript{75}

The first contacts between Mussolini and the future Heimwehr leader occurred during Starhemberg's visit to Rome on July 10, 1930. The prince was very warmly received by the duce, who expressed a great interest in Austrian politics. Starhemberg gave the Italian leader a full description of the chaotic state of his country's political affairs, the economic problems which she faced, and the internal divisions within the Heimwehr.\textsuperscript{76} In presenting this summary, he pleaded for Italian assistance to enable the Heimwehr to overcome these difficulties. Mussolini acknowledged Austria's troubled situation and promised to support her efforts to secure internal peace and stability. He, however, stressed the fact that the Heimwehr must first achieve unity

\begin{itemize}
  \item their displeasure with Steidle and to encourage Starhemberg to take over the leadership of the Heimwehr. See Kerekes, \textit{Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie}, pp. 75 and 78; and Berger, "Ernst Rüdiger Fürst Starhemberg," pp. 44-45.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{75}Kerekes, \textit{Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie}, pp. 75-77.

\textsuperscript{76}Starhemberg, \textit{Between Hitler and Mussolini}, pp. 22-23.
within its own ranks and assured Starhemberg of the necessary funds and arms to attain that goal.77

The Italian leader then provided Starhemberg with a survey of international affairs, in which he stressed the importance of Austria's independence to the continued peace of the European continent. To preserve this independence, Austria's leaders would have to guard against attacks from both the socialists and the Nazis. Although Mussolini appears to have felt that the threat from the left was greater, he, nonetheless, warned Starhemberg against associating himself too closely with the National Socialists. The Heimwehr, not the Nazis, the Italian leader asserted, was to lead the patriotic rejuvenation of Austria. Finally, Mussolini stressed that any sort of union with Germany had to be avoided. Such a move would not only be tantamount to a surrender of Austria's independence but could have severe repercussions on the European balance of power. While acknowledging that these tasks would be difficult, the duce assured Starhemberg of his continued interest and support for Austria.78

During his talks with Mussolini, Starhemberg became impressed with the need to unify the Heimwehr and to check the advances of the Social Democrats and the National Socialists. As an important step toward the achievement of

77Ibid., pp. 23 and 27.
78Ibid., pp. 24 and 26-27.
these goals, the prince, following his election as the Heimwehr's national leader, entered the minority government of Karl Vaugoin, which was formed after the collapse of Schober's administration on September 25, 1930. Originally Starhemberg hesitated to serve in the Vaugoin government, and only as a result of pressure from other Heimwehr leaders and from Italy did he finally agree to accept the post of minister of interior and to work with the new chancellor. ⁷⁹ Once in office, however, he took full advantage of his position to hinder the Social Democrats' activities and to censor their newspapers. ⁸⁰

Starhemberg also paid close attention to Mussolini's advice concerning his relations with the National Socialists. Despite pressures from a number of close associates, he consistently refused to enter into a partnership with the Austrian Nazis. Even when approached by Gregor Strasser, one of Hitler's chief agents in Austria, with promises of financial assistance and a proposal for a common front in the coming elections, Starhemberg reaffirmed his intentions to keep the Heimwehr independent of Nazi influence. ⁸¹ Indeed, shortly after his talks with Strasser, the Heimwehr

⁷⁹ Kerekes, Abendmümmernung einer Demokratie, p. 87; Berger, "Ernst Rüdiger Fürst Starhemberg," pp. 50-52.


leader moved to block the Nazis from making any substantial gains in the parliamentary elections by organizing an independent electoral campaign against them. With Italian financial support, he, therefore, led the Heimwehr as an independent political party in the November, 1930, parliamentary elections. 

The results of the November, 1930, elections proved to be a serious defeat for the Heimwehr and its Christian Social coalition partners. Contrary to their expectations, the Vaugoin government was forced to resign. The Social Democrats received the largest vote and secured 72 seats in the new parliament. The Christian Socials followed with 66 seats, the Schober bloc (Pan-German) and Landbund coalition with 19 seats, and the Heimwehr with only 8 seats. The Christian Social Party managed to build a new government under Otto Ender with the support of the Schober bloc-Landbund deputies. The Heimwehr refused to join this coalition, however, and consequently found itself—along with its archenemy, the Social Democrats—in the opposition for the next two years.

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The outcome of the November, 1930, elections also created a new leadership crisis within the Heimwehr that paralyzed the organization's political effectiveness. The more radical elements in the organization, led by Pfrimer, demanded Starhemberg's resignation and the redirection of Heimwehr activities along more radical lines. The Heimwehr, they felt, should sever its parliamentary connections and return to its original principles as set forth in the Kor- neuberg Cath.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 206-216.} Pressure continued to mount on the prince following the April, 1931, by-elections in which the Heimwehr suffered further losses.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 221-222.} Finally, despite continued Italian support, Starhemberg was obliged to step down "temporarily" from the active leadership of the Heimwehr on May 2, 1931.\footnote{Embassy official in Vienna to the German foreign office, Vienna, May 7, 1931, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 4,497, Frames K233,416-K233,421; Berger, "Ernst Rüdiger Fürst Starhemberg," pp. 58-60.}

Starhemberg's resignation did not resolve the leadership crisis within the Heimwehr. His successor, Pfrimer, was too radical for the moderate wing of the movement and was unable to effectively secure control over the entire organization. His efforts to overthrow the Austrian government on September 13-14, 1931, also resulted in a complete
disaster.\textsuperscript{88} Fortunately for the Heimwehr, the government, consistent with its past practices, did not take any harsh measures against the conspirators. Most of the persons arrested were released after only a few days in jail, and the police made no serious effort to seize the Heimwehr's illegal weapons caches.\textsuperscript{89}

Following Pfrimer's abortive putsch the moderate elements of the Heimwehr regained control of the organization's leadership. Starhemberg reassumed his position as active director of the movement on September 23, 1931, and immediately set out to restore unity within its ranks. Throughout November and early December, he held talks with Steidle and Emil Fey, the leader of the Vienna Heimwehr, with the result that by December 11, 1931, most internal differences had been resolved and Starhemberg's leadership was recognized by all elements of the paramilitary organization.\textsuperscript{90}

After consolidating his position within the Heimwehr, Starhemberg sought to renew his foreign contacts in Italy and Hungary. In June, 1932, therefore, he made his second visit to Italy for talks with Mussolini. In Rome, the

\textsuperscript{88}Embassy official in Vienna to the German foreign office, Vienna, September 14, 1931, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS, ser. T-120, Reel 4,497, Frames K233,426-K233,430; Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini, pp. 61-65; Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, pp. 95-97.

\textsuperscript{89}Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, p. 97.

\textsuperscript{90}Berger, "Ernst Rüdiger Fürst Starhemberg," pp. 65-68.
Heimwehr leader received a very friendly welcome; the Italian government had not been very pleased with Pfrimer's activities and was glad to see Starhemberg resume control of the Heimwehr. As he had done before, the prince once again requested additional funds and arms for his organization. The discussions included a plan for the transport of 50,000 rifles and a number of machine guns to Hungary, part of an agreement that Starhemberg had concluded with Gyula Gömbös, the Hungarian minister of war, during their meeting in September, 1930. In addition to the arms for Hungary, the Italian leader promised Starhemberg a like number of rifles and machine guns for the Heimwehr.

Mussolini also inquired into the current state of Austrian political affairs. Starhemberg described the situation as being difficult, but by no means hopeless. Nazi pressure had increased, but with adequate funds, arms, and popular support, it could be surmounted. In response to Mussolini's questions concerning the political orientation of Austria's new chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuß, Starhemberg replied that he had complete confidence in Dollfuß' abilities and went on to emphasize his rightist political

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91 Indeed, the Italians had not even been forewarned of Pfrimer's putsch and were rather upset by his actions. See Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, pp. 95 and 105-106.

92 Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini, pp. 31-32.

93 Ibid., pp. 91-93.
orientation. The talks between the two men subsequently closed on a friendly note with Mussolini once again assuring Starhemberg of his continued support for Austria and her new chancellor.

\[^{94}\text{Ibid.}, pp. 89-90.\]
CHAPTER III
MUSSOLINI AND DOLLFUß:
AUSTRO-ITALIAN RELATIONS
MAY, 1932, TO JANUARY, 1934

Engelbert Dollfuß had been chancellor of Austria for little more than a month at the time of the Mussolini-Starhemberg conversations in Rome. A man of great personal integrity, industry, and courage, Dollfuß had assumed office on May 6, 1932, under extremely unfavorable circumstances. The Christian Social, Pan-German, Landbund coalition which had governed Austria throughout most of the preceding decade had collapsed in January, 1932, as a result of a bitter dispute over the government's position on the question of an Austro-German union.¹ and the subsequent minority Christian Social, Landbund coalition, under the leadership of Karl Buresch, was unequal to the task of governing the country and controlling the parliamentary opposition. The Christian Socials also had suffered a number of setbacks in the April, 1932, provincial elections,² and

¹The split between the Pan-Germans and the Buresch coalition occurred when Schober, the leader of the Pan-German Party, was dismissed from his post as foreign minister because of his stand in favor of an Austro-German union and his opposition to French plans in Central Europe. See Andics, Der Staat den keiner wollte. Österreich, 1918-1938, pp. 372-373; Walter Goldinger, Geschichte der Republik Österreich (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1962), p. 169; Jürgen Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß, 1931-1938 (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 40-41.

party leaders feared that the new elections demanded by the opposition would result in their defeat at the hands of the Social Democrats and the National Socialists. Thus the new chancellor was faced with the complex problem of creating a coalition from among the existing political parties which could command a majority in parliament and thereby obviate the need for holding new elections. In building his government, Dollfuß consequently was obliged to give careful consideration to a number of alternative political combinations, including the possibility of a coalition with the Austrian Heimwehr.

As a result of these circumstances, the Heimwehr's eight votes in parliament suddenly assumed immense importance. The Austrian chancellor at first was reluctant to invite the paramilitary organization to join his government, but the failure of his efforts to reach an understanding with either the Social Democrats or the Pan-Germans forced him to accept a partnership with the Heimwehr. Without their eight votes, the government's existence would be dependent upon the sufferance of the opposition—a situation

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5Dollfuß' government was based on a coalition of Christian Socials (66 seats), Landbund representatives (9 seats),
which Dollfuß could not accept. Shortly after he came to power, therefore, the chancellor entered into negotiations with Starhemberg. As a result of these talks, the Heimwehr agreed to work with the government, and two of its supporters became members of Dollfuß' first cabinet—Dr. Guido Jakoncik as minister of trade and Hermann Ache as minister of interior. 6

Dollfuß' admission of the Heimwehr to his government had significant implications for the subsequent course of Austrian politics. A conservative in his approach to government, the chancellor's association with this paramilitary organization caused him gradually to assume a strongly pro-fascist orientation. 7 The Heimwehr's membership in the Austrian government also provided Mussolini with a more direct channel for the expansion of Italian influence in the country's affairs. Austria's internal difficulties and her

and Heimwehr members (3 seats), which gave him a one vote majority over the Social Democratic (72 seats)-Pan-German opposition. Since he was unable to form a coalition with either of the opposition parties, the only way in which Dollfuß could build a government with a majority in parliament was through a coalition with the Heimwehr. See Gulick, Austria from Habsburg to Hitler, Vol. II, pp. 978-979. The political make up of the Austrian parliament as described here resulted from the November, 1930, parliamentary elections. See Neue Freie Presse, November 10, 1930 (Abendblatt), p. 1.

6 Neue Freie Presse, May 21, 1932 (Morgenblatt), pp. 1-3; Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini, pp. 85-87; Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, p. 89.

uneasy foreign situation—a result of difficulties with the Little Entente—could be used by the Italian dictator to enable him to appear as her protector. Indeed, as the chancellor's reliance upon the Heimwehr increased, Mussolini was able to move closer to the fulfillment of his aspirations for an Italian-dominated bloc in Central Europe.

One of the earliest developments which tended to strengthen Dollfuß' shift toward a pro-fascist outlook involved the difficulties that he encountered in securing parliamentary approval for the Lausanne loan. On July 15, 1932, the chancellor concluded an agreement in Lausanne which provided Austria with a 300 million schilling loan guaranteed by the League of Nations. The funds were necessary to stabilize the country's economy and to repair the damage wrought by the world-wide depression that had hit Austria particularly hard following the collapse of the Credit-Anstalt bank in May, 1931. Dollfuß, therefore, accepted the League's demand that the Austrian government pledge to abstain from any economic or political union with Germany for the duration of the agreement.8 Upon returning to Vienna, however, the chancellor encountered considerable opposition to the pact from both the Social Democrats and the Pan-Germans because of this ban against an Austro-German Anschluß. Although the loan finally won approval on August

8 Bullock, Austria, 1918-1938, p. 219; Andics, Der Staat den keiner wollte. Österreich, 1918-1938, p. 380; Goldinger, Geschichte der Republik Österreich, p. 172.
23, 1932, it was by the narrowest of margins, and the struggle over its passage estranged Dollfuß from the Social Democrats and caused him seriously to doubt the viability of parliamentary democracy in Austria.

The parliamentary struggle over the Lausanne loan also strengthened the position of the Heimwehr within the government. The organization's votes in parliament had been critical in securing the agreement's ratification, and Dollfuß was grateful to its leaders for their cooperation. As an indication of the Heimwehr's increased importance, Emil Fey, one of the organization's prominent leaders, was admitted to the cabinet as secretary of state for security on October 17, 1932. Fey's appointment to this important post was especially significant in light of his intransigent opposition to the Social Democrats.

The struggle over the Lausanne loan, however, only

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served as a prelude to the emergence of closer ties between Dollfuß and the Austrian Heimwehr. Of far greater import for these developments—and to the growth of friendly relations between Rome and Vienna—was the series of events that surrounded the "Hirtenberg Affair." The incident arose out of the Arbeiter Zeitung's disclosure on January 8, 1933, of the involvement of Austrian officials in the secret arms traffic between Italy and Hungary. While the British and French knew of these dealings and generally had ignored them in the past, the public exposure of the smuggling operations compelled both governments to make inquiries in Vienna. The Austrian response—that the weapons at the Hirtenberg factory were among those acquired by Italy from Austria-Hungary at the end of the First World War and were being repaired at the request of the Italian government—failed to satisfy either Paris or London. Consequently the British and French governments sent an official protest to Vienna on February 11, 1933, demanding that the weapons in question be either

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14 Neue Freie Presse, January 9, 1933 (Abendblatt), p. 3; Gulick, Austria from Habsburg to Hitler, Vol. II, pp. 1008-1009.
returned to Italy or destroyed and that the Austrian government give assurances "under oath" that this demand had been fulfilled.\textsuperscript{15}

The Anglo-French note came as a severe shock to the Austrian government. Uncertain how to respond to its demands, Dollfuß forwarded a copy of the communique to Rome. The Italian government, quick to realize its propaganda potential, used the note to arouse public opinion against Great Britain and France.\textsuperscript{16} The Palazzo Chigi subsequently expressed its willingness to take back the weapons, and although this was never done, both the British and the French governments let the matter drop since they did not want to irritate Rome any further.\textsuperscript{17} The incident, though embarrassing, thus appeared to reach an amiable conclusion. Yet for Austria, the Hirtenberg affair had significant implications; the dispute not only impaired that country's relations with France and Great Britain but also tended to


\textsuperscript{17} Circular of the German foreign office, Berlin, March 13, 1933, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. I, p. 158; Gehl, \textit{Austria, Germany, and the Anschluss}, pp. 48-49.
force her into a closer association with Italy.\textsuperscript{18}

Internal developments further compelled Dollfuß to expand his ties with Rome. In early March, 1933, a major political crisis developed over the question of amnesty for the leaders of a recent railroad strike.\textsuperscript{19} The Social Democrats, along with the Pan-Germans, supported the amnesty proposal when it was brought to a vote in the House of Deputies, and Karl Renner, the Social Democratic president of the assembly, stepped down as presiding officer so as to be able to cast his vote in favor of the bill, thereby insuring its passage. He was succeeded by Rudolf Ramek, his Christian Social counterpart, who likewise resigned the chair in order to vote with his party. The third president of the House of Deputies, the Pan-German Franz Straffner, apparently confused as to what action he should take, followed the example of his two associates, thereby leaving the body without a speaker.\textsuperscript{20} In the ensuing disorder, the


\textsuperscript{19}For more information on this railroad strike, see Andics, Der Staat den keiner wollte. Österreich, 1918-1938, pp. 395-396; Gulick, Austria from Habsburg to Hitler, Vol. II, pp. 1016-1019.

\textsuperscript{20}Neue Freie Presse, March 5, 1933 (Morgenblatt), p. 1; March 6, 1933 (Abendblatt), p. 4; March 7, 1933 (Abendblatt), p. 1; Renner, Österreich von der Ersten zur Zweiten Republik, pp. 128-129; Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, pp. 97-99; Gulick, Austria from Habsburg to Hitler, Vol. II, pp. 1019-1022.
assembly dispersed. Only later did the leaders of the opposition realize that, with the resignation of all three presidents, there was no longer a presiding officer to call parliament back into session. The federal president, Wilhelm Miklas, was the only individual who could reconvene the assemblage.21

Dollfuß moved quickly to insure that parliament would not be reassembled. Having lost confidence in parliamentary democracy, the chancellor felt that it would be easier to direct Austrian affairs without the obstructionism of the Social Democrats in that body.22 He went to Miklas, therefore, and secured the president's permission to rule by decree.23 Subsequent efforts by the Social Democrats and the Pan-Germans to reconvene parliament were squelched,24 and opposition newspapers and political organizations were either suppressed or seriously restricted in their activities.25


25 Ingrid Adam, "Zum 12. Februar 1934," Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur, Vol. VIII, No. 1, p. 2; Felix
While providing a solution to a number of problems, the dissolution of the Austrian parliament failed to silence completely the Social Democratic opposition to the government as Dollfuß had hoped. More disquieting, however, was the expansion of National Socialist activity, especially following Hitler's appointment as chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933, and the Nazi victories in the March, 1933, German parliamentary elections. Austrian Nazi propaganda, supported by German radio broadcasts from Munich, worked to undermine the government's position in the eyes of its people. At the same time, Nazi bombings and violence served to terrorize anyone who supported the Dollfuß regime.26 These new difficulties, coupled with his earlier ones, impressed upon the chancellor the need to find outside support for his government. In April, 1933, Dollfuß, therefore, decided to visit Italy and her fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini.

The Austrian chancellor's decision to seek support for his government in Rome was not an easy one. Italy was Austria's traditional enemy; their armies had faced each other


in numerous conflicts, culminating in the First World War. Yet during the decade and a half since the conclusion of that struggle, Italy had demonstrated a very friendly attitude toward Austria. Rome's aid to the Austrian Heimwehr had won her many adherents among Dollfuß' conservative supporters. The Italian government likewise had played an important part on Austria's behalf during the recent League of Nations negotiations over the Lausanne loan and subsequently had expressed an interest in establishing closer economic ties between the two countries. During the Hirtenberg affair Italy had come to Austria's defense against the diplomatic onslaughts of France and Great Britain. Mussolini also had demonstrated an understanding of Dollfuß' recent parliamentary dilemma and had expressed approval of his dissolution of that body. Perhaps of greatest importance, however, was the fact that Rome had assumed a position in support of Austria during her recent

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27 Egger-Höllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, March 4, 1932, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXIII, No. 21,61,4, Fo. 2937.

28 Memorandum by Köpke, Berlin, December 9, 1932, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 4,010, Frames KL25,924-KL25,926; Egger-Höllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, November 15, 1932, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXIII, No. 24,976, Fos. 421-422; Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, pp. 116-120.

29 Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, p. 136.
dealings with Germany. Despite past differences, therefore, Italy appeared as the most logical source of assistance for Austria.

Dollfuß arrived in Rome on April 11, 1933, ostensibly to spend the Easter holidays in the Eternal City and to discuss with the Vatican a few of the problems that were delaying the conclusion of the concordat between Austria and the Catholic Church. At the same time, the trip afforded the Austrian chancellor an opportunity to meet Mussolini and a number of other Italian fascist leaders. Dollfuß' talks with the duce went quite well; each was impressed with the other's abilities and found that the other shared many of the same interests. The Austrian chancellor secured Mussolini's assurance that Italy would urge the French government to fulfill its pledge of financial assistance to

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31 Kurt Rieth, German minister to Austria, to the German foreign office, Vienna, April 11, 1933, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 3,300, Frame K578,438; circular of the Austrian chancellery, Vienna, April 23, 1933, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCIV (Italien I/III), No. 21,982, Pos. 642-643; Ulrich von Hassell, German ambassador to Italy, to the German foreign office, Rome, April 20, 1933, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. I, p. 318.
Austria under the Lausanne loan agreement. Dollfuß also discussed his plans for the establishment of an authoritarian regime in Austria and explained his difficulties with the Austrian Nazis.

Mussolini expressed considerable interest in the Austrian chancellor's efforts to remodel his government along fascist lines. The establishment of an authoritarian regime in Vienna was of obvious value to the fulfillment of Italian aspirations in Central Europe. The Italian dictator, therefore, encouraged his guest in his plans by promising him Italy's support for his endeavors. To aid Dollfuß in arousing public support for his program, Mussolini suggested the creation of a "patriotic front" composed of elements loyal to the government. Within this organization, the Heimwehr, the most patriotic group in Austria, naturally would have a key role, and the Italian dictator indicated that he expected to see the paramilitary organization given a greater voice in Austrian affairs. Mussolini also recognized the existence of the Nazi problem and promised to

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32 Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, April 20, 1933, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. I, pp. 319-320; Rieh to the German foreign office, Vienna, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 3,300, Frame E578,438.


34 Ibid., p. 320.

35 Ibid.
support Dollfuß in his efforts to suppress their acts of terrorism. He went on to insist, however, that the socialists posed the more serious threat to Austria and encouraged the chancellor to undertake strong measures against them. 36

Finally, in connection with her economic difficulties, the duce suggested that Austria seek to develop closer ties with Hungary. 37

Dollfuß was greatly impressed by his talks with Mussolini, and the assurances that he received from the Italian dictator apparently encouraged him in his plans to rebuild Austria's government. Upon his return to Vienna, therefore, he implemented several of the Italian leader's key suggestions. On May 10, 1933, Dollfuß reorganized his cabinet; he promoted Emil Fey to the post of minister of public security and admitted another Heimwehr leader, Odo Neustädter-Stürmer, to the government as secretary of state for employment. 38 Together with Starhemberg, Dollfuß founded the Fatherland Front on May 14, 1933, to serve as a union of all individuals loyal to the ideal of Austrian independence. The chancellor, furthermore, used the occasion of the Front's inception to declare that parliamentary democracy was dead in Austria and to announce his intention of

36 Ibid.

37 Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß, p. 51.

38 Neue Freie Presse, May 11, 1933 (Morgenblatt), pp. 1-2; May 11, 1933 (Abendblatt), p. 2; Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß, p. 51.
leading the country along a new course of political development. 39

After some delay Dollfuß also acted to improve relations with Hungary. On July 9, 1933, he met in Vienna with Gömbös, then minister-president of Hungary. The two men examined political and economic matters of mutual interest but concluded no concrete agreements. The Hungarians disappointed Dollfuß by their refusal to take a firm stand in support of his efforts to suppress the Nazis. 40 The talks ended on a positive note, however, with both men stressing their friendship for Italy and her fascist dictator. 41

Mussolini, in turn, gave his assurances of support for Austria more concrete form than mere promises. Throughout its diplomatic correspondence, the Italian foreign office attempted to make it explicitly clear that it would not tolerate any German interference in Austria. Whereas Mussolini recognized that Germany had certain special interests in that country, he insisted that these interests

39 Neue Freie Presse, May 15, 1933 (Abendblatt), p. 3; Rieß to the German foreign office, Vienna, May 19, 1933, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 4, 633, Frames K282, 638-K282, 641.


41 Dollfuß to Mussolini, Vienna, July 22, 1933, Sweet,
would not be allowed to threaten her independence. Both the Italian press and the Italian foreign office loudly denounced Nazi terrorism, and on several occasions Rome officially remonstrated against Nazi propaganda attacks on Dollfuß. Mussolini also approved the Austrian chancellor's proposals to outlaw the National Socialist Party in Austria in June, 1933, although he advised him to avoid any serious confrontation with the Nazis. Thus while he had no desire to disrupt his otherwise friendly relations with Germany, the Italian dictator sought to impress upon Berlin that he would not accept German encroachments upon Italy's sphere of influence in Austria.

In addition to warning the German government against


44 Mussolini approved this proposal during his talks with Dollfuß in early June, 1933. See Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, June 14, 1933, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 3,350, Frames E578,450-E578,453.

45 German-Italian relations during this period will be discussed in greater detail in chapter IV.
involvement in Austria, the Italian foreign office acted to expand its influence in that country. On July 1, 1933, Mussolini sent Dollfuß a letter in which he clearly indicated what Italy desired of Austria. After commenting on the country’s patriotic reawakening and praising the creation of the Fatherland Front, the Italian dictator proceeded to give the Austrian chancellor some practical advice. He encouraged him in his efforts to check Nazi activities but went on to suggest that the socialists were a more serious problem for the Austrian government. From Mussolini’s point of view, the continued existence of the socialists would provide the Nazis with an important propaganda weapon, enabling them to claim to be the saviors of Austria from the "red peril." By attacking the socialists, Dollfuß would deprive the Nazis of this weapon, at the same time winning greater support for his government among anti-Marxist groups. The Italian leader’s letter went on to stress the need to carry out other reforms which would remodel Austria’s government along genuinely fascist lines. The importance of closer cooperation between Austria and Hungary, especially in economic matters, also was emphasized.


Mussolini's letter of July 1, 1933, thus reaffirmed certain basic tenets of his plans for Central Europe. The need for closer economic and political ties between Austria and Hungary, under Italian patronage, was reemphasized, and a campaign against the socialists was once more proposed. Dollfuß' reply to these suggestions was very noncommittal. Though he reaffirmed his intentions to implement the Italian dictator's proposals and described the progress that thus far had been made toward the establishment of a fascist state, the Austrian chancellor refused to commit himself to any precise programs or to a definite timetable. These things, he insisted, could be determined only by conditions in Austria, not by outside influences.  

Dollfuß' evasive reply to his letter, however, did not discourage the Italian dictator in his plans for Central Europe. During the visit of Gömbös and the Hungarian foreign minister, Kálmán de Kánlya, in Rome on July 25-28, 1933, Mussolini expounded his plans to his Hungarian guests. Although both leaders rejected the idea of a customs union between their respective countries, they emphasized the need for establishing closer economic and political ties between Rome, Budapest, and Vienna. They also agreed that Italy

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50 Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, July 28, 1933, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 3,500, Frame E578,684-E578,690; Egger-Höllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, July 30, 1933, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues
and Hungary would undertake to mediate the existing differences between Austria and Germany. Mussolini, however, insisted that as a precondition for these negotiations, Germany must recognize Austria's independence and cease meddling in that country's domestic affairs.\(^{51}\)

At almost the exact moment when he was outlining his aims in Central Europe to the Hungarians, Mussolini's plans received a jolt from an unexpected source: the Austrian chancellor. In an effort to broaden the international support of his government, thereby reducing his dependence on Italy, Dollfuß made an appeal to London on July 24, 1933, for a joint British, French, and Italian démarche in Berlin to protest the recurrent acts of Nazi terrorism in Austria.\(^{52}\) This move, although not totally unexpected, was taken in opposition to Italian wishes, and Rome could only interpret it as a deliberate effort on Dollfuß' part to free himself


\(^{52}\) British foreign office to Ronald Hugh Campbell, British ambassador to France, [London], July 4, 1933, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. V, pp. 396-398; Graham to Sir John Simon, secretary of state for foreign affairs, Rome, July 11, 1933, ibid., p. 409; Graham to Robert Vansittart, undersecretary of state for foreign affairs, Rome, July 15, 1933, ibid., p. 430; Gehl, Austria,
from Italian influence. Although Italy subsequently joined Great Britain and France in making inquiries in Berlin, it was apparent in Rome that pressure needed to be exerted upon the Austrian chancellor to prevent a recurrence of his recent actions. To achieve this end, the Palazzo Chigi suggested that Dollfuß should again visit Italy in the near future.

In compliance with Italian wishes, the Austrian chancellor traveled to Riccione to confer with Mussolini on August 19-20, 1933. For both men the meeting was significant. Dollfuß opened the talks by outlining the situation in Austria. He described his country's unfavorable economic position and asked for further Italian assistance. Recent Nazi activities were also discussed, and the Austrian chancellor requested that Italy use her influence in Berlin to reduce these problems. Mussolini promised to assist Dollfuß with his difficulties in both areas.

The Italians then presented the Austrian chancellor


53 Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß, p. 62.


55 Schärf, Geheimer Briefwechsel Mussolini-Dollfuß, p. 31; Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß, pp. 69-70.

with a "note" for his consideration which involved a clear statement of Italian aims in Austria. Dollfuß was to make a number of changes which would "signalise [sic] the beginning of a new course in Austrian domestic and foreign policy." The note suggested that the Heimwehr's role in Austrian affairs should be greatly expanded and that two of its leaders--Steidle and Starhemberg--be given posts in the cabinet. The Fatherland Front was to be further strengthened, and the government was to assume a more pronounced dictatorial character. Also, the long awaited campaign against the socialists was to be executed. Most of these changes were to be announced by Dollfuß in an address to the Austrian people, to be delivered shortly after his return to Vienna.

In return for the fulfillment of these demands, Mussolini promised to support Austria in her economic and political difficulties. Vienna would receive additional

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57 Note to Federal Chancellor Dr. Dollfuß for his consideration, [Rome, August 19-20, 1933], Sweet, "Mussolini and Dollfuß," p. 192.

58 Ibid., p. 193.


60 Note to Federal Chancellor Dr. Dollfuß for his consideration, [Rome, August 19-20, 1933], Sweet, "Mussolini and Dollfuß," p. 193; embassy in Rome to the German foreign office, Rome, August 21, 1933, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 3,300, Frames E578,461-E578,462.
economic concessions from Rome. Further expansion of Italian-Austrian-Hungarian economic relations—to include the possibility of a customs union between the three states—would be dealt with at a subsequent conference.\(^6\) Italy also would undertake to convince Berlin to reduce Nazi activities in Austria and to impress upon Hitler the necessity of her continued independence.\(^6\) Strong indications also exist that some kind of Austro-Italian military accord was discussed. Although exact details are not available, the transfer of large numbers of Italian troops to the Brenner frontier would tend to indicate that Mussolini was preparing to back his defense of Austria's independence with force should the need arise.\(^6\)

Upon his return to Vienna, Dollfuß implemented a number

\(^6\)Note to Federal Chancellor Dr. Dollfuß for his consideration, [Rome, August 19-20, 1933], Sweet, "Mussolini and Dollfuß," p. 193; notes made for the [Austrian] foreign office [by Dollfuß], [Rome, August 19-20, 1933], ibid., p. 194.

\(^6\)Embassy in Rome to the German foreign office, Rome, June 6, 1933, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. I, p. 766.

\(^6\)Although no conclusive evidence has been found to prove the existence of an Austro-Italian military accord, a number of sources indicate the probable existence of such an agreement. Schuschnigg mentions it in his The Brutal Takeover, pp. 109-110. British and German sources also indicate its existence. See Hadow, British embassy official in Vienna, to Vansittart, Vienna, August 23, 1933, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. V, pp. 534-535; Hadow to Vansittart, Vienna, August 24, 1933, ibid., pp. 545-546; and Department II memorandum, Berlin, September 5, 1933, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. I, pp. 780-781. See also Jedlicka, "Neue Forschungs-ergebnisse zum 12. Februar 1934," pp. 85-86; and Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, p. 206.
of Mussolini's suggestions. While designed to mollify the Italian dictator, most of these alterations also coincided with the chancellor's plans for the future Austrian state. At a large political rally held on September 11, 1933, at the race track outside of Vienna, Dollfuß announced his proposals for changes in the Austrian government. The chancellor declared that traditional liberal democracy was dead in Austria and that the associated concepts of parliamentary government and political parties were outdated. This form of government, he held, only played into the hands of Austria's enemies, the socialists. The new Austrian state would be based upon the principles of authoritarian leadership and the Christian corporative state. The chancellor concluded his remarks by calling on all loyal Austrians to support him in the task of rejuvenating their Fatherland.

Shortly after his speech at the Prater race track, Dollfuß, in response to Italian wishes, also moved to expand the role of the Heimwehr in his government. On September 21, 1933, Vice Chancellor Franz Winkler, whose differences with Starhemberg had made him hated in Heimwehr circles, was forced to resign, and Emil Fey, one of his chief Heimwehr rivals, was appointed to his post. By this action, Dollfuß provided the paramilitary organization with a

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64 Neue Freie Presse, September 12, 1933 (Morgenblatt), p. 3.
65 Ibid., September 21, 1933 (Abendblatt), pp. 1-2; Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß, p. 71.
victory over one of its strongest opponents and augmented its influence in the cabinet. At the same time, however, the Austrian chancellor took care to prevent the Heimwehr from exercising too much control over his administration. Thus, while he advanced a few of its leaders to high government office, he retained control over the key ministries of foreign affairs, defense, and public security, thereby limiting the extent of the organization's power.66

Despite the implementation of many of Mussolini's suggestions, differences soon developed between the Austrian chancellor and his Italian protector. Dollfuß was willing to make a number of concessions to satisfy Rome, but he resented the pressure which was being exerted upon him and refused to comply with all of the Italian dictator's demands. He was especially irritated by the duce's letter of September 9, 1933--written at Starhemberg's request--in which the Italian leader suggested that the Austrian government was not moving "in a decisive fashion along the road to Fascism."67 Mussolini implied that this failure was the result of the chancellor's retention in his government of "certain elements" who were hindering efforts to "bring the

country out of the morass of liberalism and democracy," and suggested that the best way to correct this situation would be to expand the influence of the Heimwehr further. In an effort to resolve these difficulties, Dollfuß sent Richard Schüller, a close associate, to Rome for a meeting with the Italian leader on September 15, 1933. Mussolini, in a conciliatory manner, lauded the Austrian chancellor's speech of September 11, but went on to reaffirm the need for action against the socialists. Dollfuß, in his reply to Mussolini's letter on September 22, 1933, was likewise conciliatory. Yet, although he reaffirmed his pledge to fulfill the promises he had made to the Italian leader at Riccione, he insisted that the rate at which these changes could be made would be governed by internal conditions in Austria.

At the same time that he was seeking to placate Mussolini, Dollfuß also attempted to establish an understanding with the Nazis which would reduce his dependence upon Italy. On September 12, 1933, the Austrian chancellor, therefore, met with the German minister in Vienna, Kurt Rieth, in an effort to reach an understanding concerning Austro-German

68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., pp. 195-196.
70 Schüller to Dollfuß, Rome, September 15, 1933, ibid., pp. 196-198.
71 Dollfuß to Mussolini, [Vienna], September 22, 1933, ibid., pp. 198-199.
differences. The chancellor suggested that in order to resolve the existing conflict between the two countries, Nazi terrorism must cease, Germany must sever her ties with the Austrian National Socialist Party, and the Reich government must promise to recognize Austria's independence.\textsuperscript{72} Dollfuß, however, declined to make any corresponding concessions to the Nazis, and consequently, although the proposals were transmitted to Berlin, nothing came of the initiative.\textsuperscript{73}

Dollfuß made a further attempt to reach an understanding with Germany through diplomatic channels during his visit to Geneva on September 25-28, 1933. Concurrent with his talks with League of Nations officials on economic matters, he also sought to arrange a meeting with the German foreign minister, Baron Constantin von Neurath, who was also visiting Geneva. The German foreign minister expressed an interest in meeting with the Austrian chancellor but refused to take the first step in initiating the talks. Dollfuß, under pressure from the Heimwehr, likewise felt that, for reasons of protocol, he could not open the negotiations. Consequently, efforts to achieve an understanding between the two German states at Geneva collapsed.\textsuperscript{74}


\textsuperscript{73} Ross, \textit{Hitler und Dollfuß}, pp. 92-93.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., pp. 95-97; memorandum by Baron Alban Hahn, Geneva representative of the news service Telegraphen-Union, Geneva, September 28, 1933, \textit{Documents on German Foreign}
The failure of his efforts to reach a compromise with Germany through diplomatic channels obliged the Austrian chancellor to seek direct contacts with the Nazis. He was aided in these endeavors by Theodor Habicht, the leader of the Austrian Nazi party, who opened talks on September 27, 1933, with Hermann Foppa and Franz Langoth, two leaders of the Pan-German Party. Habicht hoped to use these two men as intermediaries in future negotiations with Dollfuß and, therefore, outlined to them his party's terms for a settlement. He demanded the admission of several Nazis to the Dollfuß government, an amnesty for all party members held by the police, and the elimination of the Heimwehr; discussions concerning new elections would be held at a later date. In return for these concessions, Habicht promised to issue a statement severing all connections between the Austrian Nazis and the German party.75

Langoth and Foppa informed Dollfuß of the Nazi proposals on October 13, 1933. The Austrian chancellor indicated an interest in resolving Austro-German differences, but expressed a reluctance to enter into negotiations with Habicht. Instead, he preferred to deal more directly with either Rudolf Hess, the deputy leader of the National Socialist Party in Germany, or Hitler and asked the two

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75 Langoth, Kampf um Österreich, pp. 123-124; Ross, Hitler und Dollfuß, pp. 100-104.
Pan-Germans to establish the necessary contacts for him. These proposals were vetoed by Hitler, who insisted that differences between the Austrian government and the Nazis could be settled only by negotiations between Dollfuß and Habicht. Langoth and Foppa informed the Austrian chancellor of the German leader's position on October 25, 1933. Dollfuß, though disappointed by the results of these talks, instructed the two men to maintain their contacts with the Nazis.

At the same time that he was negotiating through Langoth and Foppa, the Austrian chancellor also attempted to open direct talks with Nazi leaders in Munich. On October 31, 1933, he sent Kurt Schuschnigg, then minister of justice, to the Bavarian capital to meet with Hess. The discussions proved to be "entirely unproductive." Schuschnigg, while indicating Austria's desire to establish good relations with Germany, insisted that the latter must be willing to

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77 Memorandum by an official of Department II, Berlin, October 30, 1933, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. II, pp. 54-56; Langoth, Kampf um Österreich, pp. 136-137.

78 Ibid.; Ross, Hitler und Dollfuß, pp. 112-113.

recognize his country's independence. Hess replied by accusing Austria of displaying a hostile attitude toward the Reich and insisted that she must lift the ban on the Nazi party, end all anti-German press polemics, and hold new elections before normal relations could be reestablished between the two countries. He also indicated that Habicht would have to be included in any negotiations between the Nazis and the Austrian government. Since these conditions were unacceptable to Dollfuß, the Munich talks were discontinued. Shortly thereafter, the Austrian chancellor also ended his contacts with Foppa and Langoth, thereby severing his lines of communications with the Austrian Nazis.

Circumstances soon developed, however, which forced Dollfuß to reopen his talks with the Germans. On December 12-13, 1933, the Italian undersecretary of state for foreign affairs, Fulvio Suvich, visited Berlin for a meeting with Von Neurath and Hitler. Although Rome subsequently insisted that these discussions in no way affected Austro-Italian relations, Vienna feared that some sort of agreement had been concluded between the two states that was

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81 Memorandum by an official of Department II, Berlin, November 16, 1933, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. II, pp. 130-132; Ross, Hitler und Dollfuß, pp. 118-120.

82 See post, pp. 117-118.
prejudicial to Austrian interests. On December 27, 1933, therefore, Dollfuß secretly instructed his minister in Berlin, Stephan Tauschitz, to renew discussions aimed at an Austro-German rapprochement and to inform Berlin that he was willing to meet directly with Habicht. Negotiations subsequently progressed very rapidly, and in early January, 1934, arrangements were concluded whereby the Austrian Nazi leader would fly secretly to Vienna for talks with Dollfuß on January 8, 1934.

Unfortunately, the Austrian chancellor's plans were altered at the last minute as a result of protests from both the Heimwehr and Rome. On the evening of January 7, 1934, Dollfuß called a meeting of his political associates—including Starhemberg and Fey—to inform them of his coming talks with Habicht. Both Heimwehr leaders reacted very violently to Dollfuß' news, and Starhemberg went so far as to inform the chancellor that if he were to adhere to these plans, the Heimwehr would cease to support him. The Italians, through Eugenio Morreale, the Italian press

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84 Memorandum by Von Neurath, Berlin, January 1, 1934, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. II, p. 160; Ross, Hitler und Dollfuß, pp. 142-149; Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluss, pp. 75-76.

85 Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini, pp. 115-117; Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluss, p. 76; Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, pp. 215-216; Oswald, "Die Stellung von Major a. D. Emil Fey," p. 85.
attaché in Vienna and Mussolini's intermediary with Starkem-berg, also protested the proposed meeting. Unable to maintain his position in Austria without the support of Italy and the Heimwehr, Dollfuß had little choice but to submit to their demands and to cancel his meeting with Habicht. The Austrian government subsequently informed the German foreign office of this abrupt change of plans on the morning of January 8, only hours before the Austrian Nazi leader was due to arrive in Vienna.

The Austrian chancellor's cancellation of his meeting with Habicht and the resulting collapse of discussions between the two men brought to an end Dollfuß' only significant effort to reach a negotiated settlement with the Austrian Nazis. Once again pressure by Italy and the Heimwehr disrupted his efforts to find a course that would enable him to achieve greater freedom of action in foreign and domestic affairs. Instead, Dollfuß found himself obliged to rely even more heavily upon Italian assistance in order to maintain his government and his nation's existence. To insure the continuation of this support, however, he was forced to comply with the demands of his Italian protector in foreign and domestic affairs—demands which became increasingly restrictive as time progressed.

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Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß, p. 76.

CHAPTER IV
MUSSOLINI AND HITLER:
ITALIAN-GERMAN RELATIONS
JANUARY, 1933, TO JANUARY, 1934

The collapse of negotiations between Dollfuß and Habicht and the Austrian chancellor's consequent increased reliance upon Italian support to insure his nation's independence corresponded admirably with Mussolini's plans for the creation of an Italian-dominated bloc in Central Europe. The Italian foreign office subsequently used Austria's precarious situation to full advantage to expand its influence in that country. Yet the discussions between the Austrian chancellor and the Nazis also focused attention on a significant obstacle which threatened to undo Italian plans in Central Europe: Hitler's aspirations to dominate Austria. These German desires were well known in Rome; indeed, the Italian foreign office had been seeking a means of reconciling German and Italian differences over Austria ever since Hitler's rise to power on January 30, 1933. An examination of these efforts at compromise between Rome and Berlin and their failure, therefore, is vital to an understanding of Italy's subsequent relations with Austria—and with Germany.

At the time of Hitler's appointment as chancellor of Germany relations between Rome and Berlin had been cordial for more than a decade. Despite differences, both countries shared certain common interests, especially concerning the
revision of the peace treaties that had ended the First World War. Italy, while among the powers which had "won" the war, felt that she had "lost" the peace.\(^1\) She consequently sympathized with Germany's desires to secure modifications in the Treaty of Versailles, especially in the clauses regulating disarmament, reparations, and national boundaries. Both countries also shared a common enemy—France—which, because of her support of the political arrangements established by the Paris peace settlement, was the chief obstacle to both Italian and German revisionist aspirations.

Italy's sympathy and understanding for Germany's post-war difficulties were manifested on several occasions during the decade and a half that followed the conclusion of the Versailles settlement. The Italian government broke with its wartime allies in the spring of 1920 and refused to dispatch Italian troops to participate in the occupation of the Rhineland.\(^2\) The Italians also took the lead in pressing for a reasonable approach to the reparations question at the Spa conference in July, 1920, by suggesting that a fixed sum be established as the total amount to be paid by

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\(^1\)Cassels, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy, p. 4; Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1927, pp. 65-68 and 74-75; Villari, Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini, pp. 3-5; Pellizzi, Italy, p. 54.

\(^2\)Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1927, p. 144.
Germany to the victorious powers.\(^3\) Most significantly, however, the Italian government under Mussolini followed a moderate policy in response to the Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in January, 1923. Although Rome was compelled to go along with the French move in order to protect Italian economic interests in the region,\(^4\) she refused to support French plans for an extended occupation of the Ruhr.\(^5\) Italian negotiators subsequently played a significant part in resolving Franco-German differences at the Inter-Allied Conference which met in London in July, 1924, to prepare an agreement for the French withdrawal from the Ruhr and to consider a new reparations proposal (the Dawes Plan).\(^6\)

Rome also undertook several positive initiatives in an effort to expand her contacts with Berlin. Italy was the first of the Western European Powers to sign a commercial treaty with Germany following the end of the First


\(^4\)Italy was in very great need of the coal produced in the region which she was to receive as part of the reparations payments due her from Germany. See Macartney and Cremona, Italy’s Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, pp. 145 and 154; Pellizzi, Italy, pp. 77-78; Currey, Italian Foreign Policy, 1918-1932, p. 83.

\(^5\)Macartney and Cremona, Italy’s Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, p. 154; Cassels, Mussolini’s Early Diplomacy, pp. 59-66.

\(^6\)Currey, Italian Foreign Policy, 1918-1932, pp. 131-132; Macartney and Cremona, Italy’s Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, pp. 154-155; Cassels, Mussolini’s Early Diplomacy, pp. 66-67 and 235-236.
World War. The pact, concluded in the Italian capital on October 31, 1925, was very limited in scope, but it gave an indication of the growing friendship between the two countries.7 Italy also worked for Germany's admission to the League of Nations and backed her request for a permanent seat on the League Council.8 During the League of Nations disarmament talks, Mussolini again extended his assistance to Germany by supporting that country's demands for a revision of the Treaty of Versailles which would allow her some degree of rearmament.9

Despite these indications of friendship, however, significant differences existed between Rome and Berlin. The problems that arose as a result of Italy's treatment of her German minorities in the Alto Adige were of particular interest. As previously noted, Italian efforts to absorb the Germans living in the region had been a source of serious recriminations between Vienna and Rome.10 Similar

7 Currey, Italian Foreign Policy, 1918-1932, pp. 146 and 159; Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, p. 155; Pellizzi, Italy, p. 119.

8 Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, p. 157; Pellizzi, Italy, p. 119.


10 See ante, pp. 22-25.
difficulties arose between Italy and Germany when the latter took up the defense of the German minorities residing in the Alto Adige in the spring of 1926. Rome was greatly irritated by the claims advanced by the German president, Paul von Hindenberg, that Germany had the right to take under her protection all German-speaking peoples, regardless of where they might live.\textsuperscript{11} The Italian government subsequently rejected all German efforts to intervene in the affairs of the province and further sought to consolidate its hold over the Alto Adige.\textsuperscript{12}

Of greater significance, however, were the differences that existed between Rome and Berlin over the question of an Austro-German union. The initial Italian response to the idea of an \textit{Anschluß} had not been entirely unfavorable.\textsuperscript{13} At the end of the First World War, Austria, due to her unstable economic position, appeared unable to survive as a nation without some kind of outside assistance, and many Italian leaders, therefore, sympathized with her desire to form a union with her northern neighbor. Yet, as Germany began to recover from the war, the prospect of her presence on the Brenner frontier aroused fears in Rome concerning the

\textsuperscript{11}Macartney and Cremona, \textit{Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy}, 1914-1937, p. 145.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., pp. 148-149; Cassels, \textit{Mussolini's Early Diplomacy}, pp. 280-283; Pellizzi, \textit{Italy}, p. 113.

\textsuperscript{13}Villari, \textit{Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini}, pp. 88-89; Pellizzi, \textit{Italy}, p. 111.
effect which a union might have on Italian security and caused the government to revise its position on the Anschluß.\textsuperscript{14} Mussolini, in an address to the Italian Senate on May 2, 1925, clearly defined Italy's new policy when he declared that his country would never permit a union of Austria and Germany.\textsuperscript{15} This position subsequently became the cornerstone of Italian foreign policy in Austria and formed an integral part of Mussolini's overall plans for Central Europe. Italy's continued adherence to this policy also provided the basis for her objections to the plans for an Austro-German customs union announced in March, 1931, and for her support of the Anglo-French suggestion that these proposals be turned over to the League of Nations for study.\textsuperscript{16}

Hitler's appointment as chancellor on January 30, 1933, promised to remove the differences that troubled German-Italian relations and to promote closer cooperation between

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14}Macartney and Cremona, \textit{Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937}, p. 148; Villari, \textit{Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini}, p. 89.
\item \textsuperscript{15}Currey, \textit{Italian Foreign Policy, 1918-1932}, p. 150; Kirkpatrick, Mussolini, \textit{A Study in Power}, p. 295; Ball, \textit{Post-War German-Austrian Relations}, pp. 58-59.
\item \textsuperscript{16}Macartney and Cremona, \textit{Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937}, pp. 149-150; Gehl, \textit{Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß}, pp. 41-43; Bullock, \textit{Austria, 1918-1938}, pp. 206-207; Egger-Höllwald to Schober, Rome, April 19, 1931, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXII, No. 22.375. Pos. 622-623; Egger-Höllwald to Schober, Rome, June 5, 1931, \textit{ibid.}, No. 22.255, Pos. 668-669.
\end{itemize}
the two countries. From the Italian point of view, the National Socialist victory in Germany marked another triumph for the fascist movement and brought to power a group of men who had been long familiar to fascist circles in Rome.\textsuperscript{17} Italian contacts with Hitler's movement can be traced back to before the November, 1923, Munich Beerhall Putsch,\textsuperscript{18} and Italy became a haven for a number of Nazi leaders following the putsch's failure and Hitler's imprisonment. Most notable among these refugees was the future minister-president of Prussia and Reichs air minister, Herman Göring, who made a number of friends within Italian fascist circles and the officer corps of the Italian air force.\textsuperscript{19} The subsequent growth of the Nazi party in Germany during the late 1920's and early 1930's attracted considerable attention in Rome, and the Italian press portrayed the Nazi gains in the German presidential election of March, 1932, and the parliamentary elections of August, 1932, as indications of an

\textsuperscript{17}Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, February 8, 1933, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 2,700, Frames H025,622-H025,524; Egger-Höllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, March 8, 1933, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXIII, No. 21,237, Fos. 516-518; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, February 6, 1933, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. I, pp. 25-26.


\textsuperscript{19}Wiskemann, The Rome-Berlin Axis, p. 25.
inevitable Nazi victory. Hitler's appointment as chancellor was hailed as the fulfillment of these predictions and as a sign of a trend in European politics which would result in the eventual victory of fascism over its chief rival, bolshevism.

Beyond marking a significant advance in the struggle to build the new fascist European order, however, the Nazi rise to power in Germany also had several political implications of significance for Rome. Close ties between Italy and Germany could provide the Italian government with a very useful counterweight to French and Little Entente influence in Central Europe. Indeed, shortly after Hitler's appointment as chancellor the Italian foreign office prepared plans for the establishment of a fascist bloc in Central Europe, which was to be composed of Italy, Germany, Hungary, and Austria. Rome also was quick to realize that her close

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20 Egger-Hüllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, March 15, 1932, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXIII, No. 21,331, Fos. 223-225; Alois Vollgruber to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, August 8, 1932, ibid., No. 23,622, Fos. 340-341.


22 This can be seen, in part, by the pressure which Italy tried to exert on Germany to work with the Dollfuß government so as to form a common front against the Left. See memorandum by Von Neurath, Berlin, March 14, 1933, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. I, pp. 160-164; memorandum by Köpke, Berlin, March 15, 1933, ibid., pp. 169-170; memorandum by Von Neurath, Berlin, April 27, 1933,
ties with Germany might be used as a bargaining point in her dealings with Great Britain and France. Mussolini's presumed ability to influence Hitler's actions and to moderate German policy would serve to greatly expand Italian prestige in international affairs.\textsuperscript{23}

German actions initially assisted in the growth of friendly relations between Rome and Berlin. Nazi propaganda warmly praised Italian fascism, and Hitler frequently described himself as a pupil of the Italian dictator.\textsuperscript{24} Ideological considerations and flattery, however, were not the only means used by Berlin to promote German-Italian friendship; Hitler also sought to resolve some of the long-standing differences between the two countries. Most notable was his policy concerning the Alto Adige. As early as 1922 he had argued that for the Nazis the Alto Adige question did not exist; the region was incontestably part of Italy.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{23}Egger-Höllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, March 8, 1933, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXIII, No. 21, 237, Fos. 516-518; Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, p. 159. Note, this is how Italy felt the situation might be manipulated, not how it, in fact, turned out.

\textsuperscript{24}Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, p. 159.

\textsuperscript{25}Dennison I. Rusinow, Italy's Austrian Heritage, 1919-
The Nazi leader continued to hold this view throughout the remainder of the decade, despite strong pressures from nationalist elements within his ranks in favor of Nazi involvement in the Alto Adige question. Although Hitler's statements on the problem did not erase all of Mussolini's doubts concerning Germany's aspirations in the region, they, nonetheless, removed the issue as a serious obstacle to German-Italian relations.

Yet, if Hitler was willing to yield to Italian wishes concerning the Alto Adige, he expected that Mussolini would endorse Germany's aspirations in Austria. As noted before, German domination of Austria was one of Hitler's basic foreign policy objectives. Whereas he repeatedly assured the Italians during his first months in office that the matter was not pressing, the Nazi leader, nonetheless, indicated that some form of union between Austria and Germany was an essential part of his future plans.

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26 Ibid., p. 217.

27 Ibid., p. 218.

interest in Austria also was confirmed by the marked expansion of Nazi activities in that country following Hitler's rise to power and by the extensive support which the Austrian Nazis subsequently received from Germany.\(^{29}\)

Mussolini displayed considerable forbearance in his response to these early incidents of Nazi terrorism in Austria. Using his own past difficulties with overeager subordinates as a basis for judgement, the duce was prone to overlook these demonstrations as the actions of a few zealous individuals which would be halted as soon as Hitler had asserted a firm control over the German government and the Nazi party.\(^{30}\) Mussolini also believed that Hitler could be won over to his plans for a fascist bloc in Central Europe which would obviate the need for an Anschluß.\(^{31}\) Thus, while admitting that the Austrian question did present difficulties for German-Italian relations, Rome felt reasonably certain that these problems could be overcome and that they

\(^{29}\) For additional details concerning Nazi activities in early 1933, see Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini, pp. 99-101; Eichstädt, Von Dollfuß zu Hitler, pp. 28-31; Bullock, Austria, 1918-1938, pp. 231-232; and Kreissler, Von der Revolution zur Annexion, pp. 207-209.

\(^{30}\) Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, p. 150.

did not pose any serious barriers to cooperation between the two countries in areas of mutual interest.

Italian expectations for the development of close ties with Germany were initially borne out during the League of Nations negotiations on disarmament in early 1933. As previously noted, Italy consistently had favored a revision of the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles which would have allowed Germany a limited degree of rearmament and had cooperated on occasion with the Stressemann and the Brüning governments to achieve this end. Following Hitler's rise to power, this cooperation was intensified. Rome frequently consulted Berlin on disarmament matters and took care to assure her that Italy would work to insure that her interests were respected in any disarmament agreement.

The close collaboration between Italy and Germany concerning disarmament was most clearly demonstrated during the negotiations that preceded the signing of the Four Power


33 Memorandum by Bülow, Berlin, February 3, 1933, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 2,700, Frame H028,603; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, February 8, 1933, ibid., Frames H028,618-H028,621.
Pact by Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy on July 15, 1933. First announced by Mussolini during the visit of the British prime minister, Sir Ramsey MacDonald, to Rome on March 18-19, 1933, the agreement was proposed as a means of breaking the deadlock that had developed in the Geneva disarmament talks. The pact contained two key provisions which recognized the principle of revision of the Paris peace settlement as useful for the maintenance of European peace and called upon the other three signatories to recognize Germany's "equality of rights" in armament matters. Even before the British government had been told of this proposal, however, Rome had secretly informed Berlin of its terms and had inquired whether they were acceptable to Germany. The Italian foreign office had emphasized that it considered the Reich's approval of the pact to be of great importance and that it would not act without Berlin's consent. The German foreign office's note of March 15, 1933, which indicated Germany's readiness


37 Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, March 15, 1933, ibid., pp. 166-167.
to accept the Italian proposal as a basis for discussions, prepared the way for Mussolini's communication of his proposed Four Power Pact to the British and the French governments on March 18, 1933.\textsuperscript{38}

Despite their close contacts and common interests concerning disarmament matters and the revision of the Paris peace settlements, however, differences soon developed between Rome and Berlin over the proposed Four Power Pact. The primary area of conflict involved the rate of German rearmament. Italy supported Germany's right to rearm, but she felt that this could be achieved only in stages and at a much slower rate than desired by Berlin.\textsuperscript{39} When Germany subsequently sought to alter the Four Power Pact proposals in a manner so as to provide for her rapid rearmament, she, therefore, met with opposition from Rome.\textsuperscript{40} Mussolini also was very irritated with what he considered to be delaying tactics on Germany's part to win further concessions.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{38}Von Neurath to Von Hassell, Berlin, March 15, 1933, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 163-164.

\textsuperscript{39}Conversation between Simon, MacDonald, and Baron Pompeo Aloisi, Italian envoy to the League of Nations, Geneva, March 14, 1933, \textit{Documents on British Foreign Policy}, 2nd ser., Vol. IV, p. 527.


Indeed, as negotiations entered their final stages Rome on several occasions found it necessary both to remind Berlin of the positive aspects of the pact—the recognition of the principle of revision and of Germany's right, however limited, to rearm—and to point out to her that Italy was Germany's only friend among the European powers. As might be expected, these reminders were not well received in Berlin. Hitler, while desirous of Italian diplomatic support objected to Rome's attempts to direct his foreign policy. Thus, although Germany subsequently signed the Four Power Pact, the earlier spirit of friendship between the two countries had been diminished.

The strains in Italian-German relations which emerged during the Four Power Pact negotiations, however, were only a minor source of irritation between the two countries. Indeed, these talks in part served to obscure the most significant area of differences between Rome and Berlin: their conflicting aspirations in Austria. Both countries, as previously noted, recognized the disparity of their foreign policy goals in Central Europe. Italy's interest in the problems of treaty revision and disarmament, however,

\[42\] Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, April 19, 1933, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. I, pp. 300-301; Von Neurath memorandum, Berlin, June 1, 1933, ibid., pp. 503-505.

\[43\] Von Neurath to Von Hassell, Berlin, March 27, 1933, ibid., p. 233.

\[44\] See ante, pp. 100-102.
provided Germany with an opportunity to expand her activities in Austria. In early 1933 Austrian Nazi groups began to receive increased financial and material assistance from the Reich, and their propaganda campaigns were augmented by the Munich radio broadcasts of the exiled Austrian Nazi leader, Theodore Habicht, and the Bavarian minister of justice, Dr. Hans Frank. 45

This increase in Nazi activities in Austria did not go unnoticed in Rome. During his talks with the German ambassador to Italy, Ulrich von Hassell, in March, 1933, Mussolini indicated his displeasure with Nazi activities in Austria and reaffirmed his intention to support that country's independence. 46 The Italian leader also sought to win German acceptance of the Dollfuß government by pointing out that its collapse would probably result in the establishment of a clerical-socialist regime in Austria. Instead of advancing the fascist cause, in Mussolini's opinion Nazi activities played into the hands of the enemy, the Social Democrats. 47 The Italian ambassador in Berlin, Vittorio Cerruti, reiterated this view during his talks with members


47 Ibid.
of the German foreign office in late March, 1933. The Hungarians, under pressure from Rome, also made representations in Berlin in support of the Dollfuß government.

Italy's protestations of concern for Austria's independence met with a mixed reception in Berlin. In replying to Cerruti's criticism of Nazi activities in Austria, Hitler categorically refused to lend his support to the Dollfuß government. Instead, he insisted that new elections be held in that country and that the Nazis be given a role in the resultant government. In deference to Rome, however, the German leader went on to affirm that the Austrian question was not of immediate concern. Yet, Hitler's refusal to disassociate himself from Austrian affairs and the indications that he anticipated an eventual union of that country with Germany made Rome uneasy.

The German government made an effort to ease relations with Italy and to win Mussolini's acceptance of Nazi aspirations in Austria during Vice Chancellor Franz von Papen's trip to Rome on April 9-18, 1933. Whereas his visit was concerned primarily with negotiations for a concordat

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between the Reich government and the Vatican, the German vice chancellor, in his talks with Mussolini and other fascist leaders, sought to convince his hosts of Germany's sincere friendship for Italy.\footnote{Graham to the British foreign office, Rome, April 15, 1933, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. V, pp. 144-146; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, April 20, 1933, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 2,700, Frames H029,666-H029,671.} These efforts were largely undone, however, by Göring, who was part of Von Papen's delegation in Rome. Although in his talks with Mussolini he also adhered to the position that the Austrian question was not critical, the Prussian minister-president made a very bad impression by telling the Italian leader that Germany would continue its propaganda campaign in Austria and by insisting that the Nazis must be allowed to come to power in that country.\footnote{British foreign office to Graham, London, April 25, 1933, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. V, p. 162; embassy in Berlin to the British foreign office, Berlin, April 29, 1933, \textit{ibid.}, p. 176.}

Italian concern about the expansion of Nazi activities in Austria was further heightened as a result of Hans Frank's trip to Vienna on May 13, 1933. The Bavarian minister of justice was a well known Nazi propagandist and one of the party's leading commentators in its Munich radio broadcasts. The Austrian government, therefore, naturally viewed his visit to Vienna with great misgiving and informed
him upon his arrival that his presence "was not desired." 54

Undeterred by this welcome, Frank proceeded to address several Nazi meetings at which he assured his listeners that Hitler one day would return to Austria. He also strongly criticized the Austrian government and at one point referred to Dollfuß as a "milli-Metternich." 55 These remarks led to clashes between the Nazis and the Heimwehr, and the Austrian government found it necessary to compel Frank to leave the country on May 16, 1933. 56 In reply to this "insult" to one of its representatives, the Reich government imposed a 1,000 mark tax on tourist visas to Austria and heightened its propaganda and economic warfare against that country. 57

Rome had followed all of these developments very closely, and while the Italian press was restrained in its

54 Rieth to the German foreign office, Vienna, May 15, 1933, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 3,391, Frames E605,186-E605,190; Gedye, Betrayal in Central Europe, pp. 70-71.


56 Rieth to the German foreign office, Vienna, May 15, 1933, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 3,391, Frames E605,186-E605,190.

reporting of these events, the Italian foreign office was very displeased by Frank's remarks and the subsequent heightening of Austro-German differences. In Mussolini's opinion, these actions only served to divide the nationalist forces in Austria and consequently played into the hands of the socialists. Berlin once again sought to temporize in its response to Rome; though declining to alter its basic goals in Austria, the German foreign office informed the Palazzo Chigi that the Austrian question was not acute and that it would not be allowed to endanger Italian-German relations.

Differences between Rome and Berlin over Austria reached a critical stage in the late summer of 1933, following Dollfuß' appeal to London on July 24, 1933, for a joint British, French, and Italian démarche in Berlin to protest

58 Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, May 17, 1933, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., scr. T 120, Reel 3,391, Frames E605,196-E605,197.


60 Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, May 17, 1933, ibid., Reel 2,700, Frames H028,682-H028,683.

61 Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, June 30, 1933, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. I, pp. 613-615. The Germans also responded to Hungarian inquiries in a like manner. See Hennet, Austrian minister in Budapest, to the Austrian chancellery, Budapest, June 23, 1933, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCCCLXXXIII (Ungarn II/4), No. 23,260, Fos. 109-112; Hennet to the Austrian chancellery, Budapest, June 21, 1933, ibid., No. 23,174, Fos. 77-80; Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, pp. 142-144.
the recurrent acts of Nazi terrorism in Austria. The Dollfuß government felt compelled to take this action in order to check the rising number of Nazi bomb attacks, the German violations of Austrian air space and the associated droppings of propaganda leaflets, and the threat posed by the presence on her borders of the Austrian Legion, a Nazi paramilitary formation composed of Austrian exiles. As previously noted, however, this move was not very well received in Rome. The Italian foreign office clearly did not approve of the Nazi actions in Austria, but it also opposed Dollfuß' efforts to win French and British support for his country's independence. Consequently, the Italian response to the British suggestion for a joint démarche in Berlin concerning German involvement in Austrian internal affairs was mixed. Although she made an official protest to the German foreign office on July 31, 1933, Italy refused to coordinate her action with the Anglo-French note of August 7, 1933.

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62 See ante, pp. 78-79.
64 See ante, pp. 78-79.
66 Graham to the British foreign office, Rome, August 3, 1933, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. V, pp. 467-468; Graham to the British foreign office, Rome, August 6, 1933, ibid., pp. 476-477; Basil C. Newton, member
The German foreign office was very conciliatory in its reply to the Italian protest. During his talks with Cerruti on August 5, 1933, State Secretary Bernhard von Bülow indicated to the Italian ambassador that while Germany rejected the right of any outside power to intervene in Austro-German discussions, she naturally desired to avoid any incidents that could lead to international complications. Hitler, therefore, had ordered that Nazi propaganda "be kept in check" and that leaflet drops over Austria be halted. The Italian foreign office, upon receiving this information, expressed its satisfaction with the German response and sought to encourage France and Great Britain to drop their protest.

The Palazzo Chigi, however, soon discovered that Hitler's assurances concerning Austria were of only limited value. Just four days after Cerutti's talks with Von Bülow, Habicht renewed his Munich radio attacks on the Dollfuss government. The contents of the speech made a "painful

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68 Bülow memorandum, Berlin, August 5, 1933, ibid., pp. 719-720.
69 Graham to the British foreign office, Rome, August 6, 1933, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. V, p. 477.
impression" upon Mussolini when reported to him by the Austrian government. The resulting Italian note accused the Reich government of having failed to keep the promises it had made concerning its involvement in Austria and warned that Italy would find it difficult to "disassociate herself from any new steps" which France and Great Britain might desire to take. In this instance, however, the German government declined to accede to Italian demands. Infuriated by what he considered to be Italian "tutelage," Hitler refused to call a complete halt to Nazi propaganda activities directed against Austria.

In the fall of 1933 Italian-German relations thus had reached a very delicate balance. Despite difficulties with Berlin, Rome still desired to achieve a detente. Indeed, the concept of a fascist bloc in Central Europe composed of Italy, Germany, Austria, and Hungary was still a major goal of Italian foreign policy—a goal which did not appear

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72 Ibid.
73 Egger-Hüllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, August 10, 1933, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXIII, No. 24, 377, Fo. 657; German ambassador in London to the German foreign office, London, September 11, 1933, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 2,700, Frames H028,722-H028,723; envoy in Budapest to the German foreign office, Budapest, August 21, 1933, ibid., Frame H028,718; Hans Smend, official in the German embassy in Rome, to the German foreign office, Rome, September 8, 1933, ibid., Frames H028,728-H028,735.
entirely outside the realm of possibility.\textsuperscript{74} Yet differences between the two countries over Austria posed a serious obstacle to these plans. Austrian independence continued to be the cornerstone of Mussolini's foreign policy in Central Europe.\textsuperscript{75} Italy's recent problems with Germany concerning Nazi activities in that country, coupled with her earlier difficulties with Berlin during the final stages of the Four Power Pact negotiations, therefore, served to undermine the bases of friendship between the two dictatorships which previously had appeared so promising.

German-Italian relations deteriorated still further as the year drew to a close. On October 14, 1933, Hitler surprised the world by announcing Germany's withdrawal from both the Geneva disarmament talks and the League of Nations.\textsuperscript{76} The German chancellor pledged that his government would continue to work for arms reduction but expressed the view that neither the League of Nations nor the Geneva talks

\textsuperscript{74}Hadow to the British foreign office, Vienna, August 24, 1933, \textit{Documents on British Foreign Policy}, 2nd ser., Vol. V, pp. 538-540; Ross, \textit{Hitler und Dollfuß}, p. 80.

\textsuperscript{75}Egger-Höllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, August 10, 1933, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), \textit{Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXIII}, No. 24, 377, Fo. 657; German ambassador in London to the German foreign office, London, September 11, 1933, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), \textit{Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS.}, ser. T-120, Reel 2,700, Frames H028-722-H028-723; Smend to the German foreign office, Rome, September 8, 1933, \textit{ibid.}, Frames H028-728-H028-735.

\textsuperscript{76}Hitler's proclamation to the German nation, Berlin, October 14, 1933, \textit{Documents on German Foreign Policy}, ser. C, Vol. II, pp. 1-2.
were making satisfactory progress toward these goals. In a private letter to Mussolini, the Führer expressed his thanks to the Italian leader for his efforts to achieve disarmament but indicated his reservations concerning the good intentions of either Great Britain or France and his doubts as to the successful outcome of the current talks.\textsuperscript{77} 

Hitler's actions came as a surprise to the Italian government. Although Mussolini had been forewarned by Von Hassell of Germany's intended withdrawal from the disarmament negotiations, nothing had been mentioned concerning her departure from the League of Nations.\textsuperscript{78} Publicly, the Italian government manifested little concern over the German action.\textsuperscript{79} Privately, however, Mussolini was "furious."\textsuperscript{80} The Italian dictator had not anticipated that Germany would withdraw from the League of Nations. Hitler's action meant the disruption of the Geneva talks 

\textsuperscript{77}Hitler to Mussolini, Berlin, November 2, 1933; ibid., pp. 63-67.

\textsuperscript{78}Indeed, Von Hassell was not even aware of Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations until after Hitler's announcement. See Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, October 16, 1933, ibid., p. 5.

\textsuperscript{79}Egger-Hüllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, October 18, 1933, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXIII, No. 25,779, Fo. 701.

\textsuperscript{80}Ibid.; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, October 20, 1933, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. II, pp. 28-29; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, October 25, 1933, ibid., pp. 43-45; Graham to the British foreign office, Rome, October 21, 1933, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. V, pp. 701-702.
and the end of efforts to secure the ratification of the Four Power Pact, thereby undoing Mussolini's diplomatic endeavors over the last eight months to secure a disarmament agreement. 81

The German government moved quickly to soothe the Italian dictator's ruffled feelings over the collapse of his disarmament project. On November 8, 1933, Hitler sent Göring to Rome with a personal letter for Mussolini explaining his reasons for taking his country out of the League of Nations and also conveying his personal assurances to the duce of Germany's continued friendship and support. 82 Hitler's note had the desired effect; Mussolini endorsed the German action, and Italy subsequently reduced her own involvement in the disarmament talks. 83 Yet though the German leader's letter served to resolve one source of irritation between the two countries, his envoy reopened their differences in another area. During his talks with

81 Egger-Hüllwald to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, October 18, 1933, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXIII, No. 25,779, F0. 701.


83 Sir Eric Drummond, British ambassador in Rome, to the British foreign office, Rome, November 7, 1933, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. VI, pp. 11-12; Drummond to the British foreign office, Rome, November 7, 1933, ibid., pp. 12-13; Drummond to the British foreign office, Rome, November 18, 1933, ibid., pp. 58-59; Köpke memorandum, Berlin, [December 11, 1933], National Archives (Washington, D.C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 2,700, Frames H026,808-H026,809.
Mussolini, Göring casually mentioned the Austrian situation. After reaffirming Berlin's position that the matter was not critical and that Germany did not plan to force a resolution of her differences with Austria, Göring, nonetheless, insisted that eventually the two German states would have to be united. Instead of easing relations between the two countries, these remarks only served to resurrect old doubts in Rome concerning German aspirations in Central Europe.

Italian fears concerning Hitler's plans for Austria were largely substantiated as a result of Suvich's trip to Berlin on December 12-13, 1933. Whereas his talks with officials of the German foreign office passed without incident, the Italian state secretary's meeting with Hitler was more tense. The Nazi leader readily admitted that the Austrian question was not acute for Germany at the moment but went on to insist that the Dollfuß government had to make some kind of accommodation with the National Socialists and that it must follow a foreign policy compatible with its position as a German state. Suvich's efforts

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to defend the Austrian chancellor and his government were brushed aside by Hitler, who expressed the view that it was impossible for him to deal with Dollfuß. Although both men subsequently agreed not to let their differences in Central Europe affect relations between their two countries adversely, Suvich came away from the talks very disheartened over what he described as Germany's "very rigid" position concerning Austria.

Suvich's talks in Berlin highlighted the growing German-Italian differences over Austria. While he had not yet abandoned his plans for a fascist bloc in Central Europe, Mussolini was obliged to recognize that Germany's aspirations for Austria ran contrary to his own aims in that country. The task of balancing his belief in the necessity of maintaining Austria's independence with his desire to establish good relations with Nazi Germany thus presented the duce with a serious dilemma—a dilemma for which no answer was readily available.

Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXIII, No. 99,431, Pgs. 743-744.


CHAPTER V
THE WATCH IS SET ON THE BRENNER
JANUARY, 1934, TO JULY, 1934

The results of Suvich's meetings with German leaders in Berlin in December, 1933, impressed upon the Italian government the seriousness of its differences with Germany over Austria. Berlin's refusal to halt Nazi interference in Austrian affairs not only reinforced Rome's fears concerning the danger of an Austro-German *Anschluß* but also focused attention on the conflicting Italian-German aspirations in that country as a major obstacle to Italian plans for the creation of a fascist bloc in Central Europe.¹ Mussolini thus was faced with the difficult decision of whether to continue his efforts to win German acceptance of his plans for Central Europe or to seek closer ties with France and Great Britain in an attempt to check German expansion in that region. The latter course of action, it should be noted, had gained wide acceptance within the Italian foreign office following Suvich's return from Berlin.² Indeed, Hitler's disregard of Italian interests in


²Mackensen to the German foreign office, Budapest, January 17, 1934, *ibid.*, Frames H028,854-H028,856.
Austria, coupled with his disruption of the Geneva disarmament talks, gave credence to the view that the Nazi dictator could not be trusted. While Mussolini shared a number of these opinions concerning Italian-German differences in Central Europe, he was not yet prepared to abandon his efforts to achieve an understanding with Germany. Despite the unfavorable outcome of the recent talks in Berlin, the Italian dictator still felt that a compromise with Germany over Austria was possible.

Mussolini apparently based his confidence in his ability to resolve Italian-German differences in Central Europe on his persistent belief that Germany could be persuaded to accept Austrian independence and to join a fascist coalition in Central Europe. Hitler's repeated assurances that the Austrian question was not pressing and that he was willing to allow the Austrian Nazis to participate in a coalition government encouraged the duce to believe that, despite

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3 Ibid.
4 Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, December 22, 1933; Ibid., Reel 3,300, Frames E578,490-E578,492.
5 Italy's earlier efforts to convince Berlin to accept the Dollfuß government and to join in a fascist coalition in Central Europe have been discussed in Chapter 4. See ante, pp. 101-102, 106-107, and 113-114. Further indications of Mussolini's efforts along these lines may be found in Hadow to the British foreign office, Vienna, August 24, 1933, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. V, pp. 538-539; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, March 17, 1934, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. II, pp. 628-631; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, March 23, 1934, Ibid., pp. 668-669.
existing differences over Austria, a suitable compromise might be found. The principal difficulty, so it appeared to Rome, lay in forging a strong fascist government in Vienna. Although Dollfuß had already begun to move in this direction by expanding the authoritarian character of the Austrian state and by increasing the influence of the Heimwehr in his government, much remained to be done. The Austrian chancellor still had not fulfilled the duce's demand that he suppress the socialists and even had made efforts to reduce his dependence on Italy. Under these circumstances, therefore, Rome felt that pressure once again would have to be exerted upon Dollfuß in order to insure his continued acquiescence in Italian plans for Central Europe. Mussolini consequently decided to send Suvich to Vienna for talks with the Austrian chancellor.

6 Examples of German assertions that the Austrian question was not pressing may be found in Rinteln to the Austrian chancellor, Rome, December 21, 1933, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXIII, No. 99,431, Fos. 743-744; Köpke memorandum, Berlin, December 20, 1933, National Archives (Washington, D.C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 2,700, Frames H028,829-H028,836; Von Neurath memorandum, Berlin, April 27, 1933, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. I, p. 351; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, June 30, 1933, ibid., pp. 613-614; Von Neurath memorandum, Berlin, November 20, 1933, ibid., Vol. II, pp. 142-143. The remark concerning Hitler's willingness to allow the Nazis to join a coalition government is in reference to the Dollfuß-Habicht talks of October-December, 1933. See ante, pp. 86-90.

7 The reference is to Dollfuß' appeal to the League of Nations in July-August, 1933, and to his dealings with the Nazis. See ante, pp. 78-79 and 84-90.

8 Kerekes, Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie, p. 176;
The Italian state secretary's arrival in the Austrian capital on January 18, 1934, marked a significant intensification of Italian efforts to compel Dollfuß to complete the creation of a fascist state in Austria. Acting on behalf of the duce, Suvich once again outlined to the Austrian chancellor what Rome expected of his government if it was to continue to receive Italian assistance. Dollfuß was informed that his plans to build a fascist state in Austria had been progressing far too slowly from the Italian point of view and that further delay in fulfilling the promises which he had made at Riccione would not be tolerated. Rome anticipated that the influence of the Heimwehr in the Austrian government would be further increased and that a new, fascist constitution would be enacted in the immediate future. The Italian government also expected that economic and political ties between Vienna, Rome, and Budapest would be expanded. Of greatest importance, Suvich insisted, was the immediate elimination of the socialists. The Austrian chancellor was told that the time for hesitation was past and that if he did not act immediately to launch a


Suvich to Dollfuß, [Rome, January 26, 1934], Sweet, "Mussolini and Dollfuß," p. 200; Schärf, Geheimer Briefwechsel, Mussolini-Dollfuß, p. 44.

campaign against the socialists, the Italian government would be obliged to discontinue its support of his regime.\textsuperscript{11} Suvich even went so far as to indicate to Fey that he might be considered as a possible candidate for the chancellorship.\textsuperscript{12}

Consistent with his past responses to Italian pressure, Dollfuß once again sought to temporize in his reply to Suvich's demands. At almost the same moment when he was assuring the Italian state secretary of his intentions to establish a fascist state in Austria, the chancellor also was seeking to reach a compromise with the Social Democrats that would enable him to reduce his dependence on Rome and the Austrian Heimwehr. On January 19, 1934--while Suvich was still in Vienna--Dollfuß issued his appeal for support to the "honorable labor leaders" of Austria.\textsuperscript{13} Shortly thereafter, he made a further effort to bridge the gap between himself and the Social Democratic Party by entering into discussions with several of its moderate leaders.\textsuperscript{14} Unfortunately before they could produce any positive

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}


\textsuperscript{13}Neue Freie Presse, January 19, 1934 (Morgenblatt), pp. 1 and 3-4; Brook-Shepherd, \textit{Prelude to Infamy}, p. 127.

\textsuperscript{14}Brook-Shepherd, \textit{Prelude to Infamy}, pp. 114-121 and 127-128.
results these talks were interrupted by the clashes which broke out between the Social Democrats and the Austrian government in February, 1934.

Dollfuß also sought to evade Italian pressure by arousing international support for his government. During the last several months, Nazi terrorism in Austria continued to increase, and on January 17, 1934, the Austrian government delivered an official protest to the Wilhelmstraße, charging the German government with complicity in these activities.15 Berlin's rejection of the Austrian note provided Dollfuß with an opportunity to appeal to the League of Nations for support against Nazi aggression.16 The move was intended not only to arouse international opinion against German activities in Austria but also to enable Dollfuß to win British and French support for his government, thereby


reducing his dependence on Italy.\textsuperscript{17} As soon as it perceived his intentions, the Italian foreign office sought to block the Austrian chancellor's appeal.\textsuperscript{18} Unable to achieve this objective, Rome was obliged to acquiesce to a joint British-French-Italian declaration, released on February 17, 1934, which reaffirmed the interest of the three powers in Austria's independence.\textsuperscript{19}

Dollfuß' efforts to avoid the implications of Suvich's visit and to free himself from dependence on Italy were brought to a close, however, by the series of clashes that broke out between the Social Democrats and the Heimwehr at the end of January, 1934. Undoubtedly as a result of his own personal ambition and the encouragement that he had received from Suvich,\textsuperscript{20} Fey ordered the mobilization of the

\textsuperscript{17}Brook-Shepherd, \textit{Prelude to Infamy}, pp. 224-225; Gehl, \textit{Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß}, pp. 78-81.


\textsuperscript{19}The Times (London), February 19, 1934, p. 12; British foreign office to Drummond, London, February 17, 1934, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. VI, pp. 425-426; Drummond to the British foreign office, Rome, February 17, 1934, \textit{ibid.}, p. 427.

\textsuperscript{20}Starhemberg, \textit{Between Hitler and Mussolini}, pp. 120-121; Brook-Shepherd, \textit{Prelude to Infamy}, p. 127.
Heimwehr units under his command on January 27, 1934. At
the same time, he advised his commanders to be on the alert,
that the time for "decisive action" against the socialists
was at hand.\textsuperscript{21} In an address to a Heimwehr meeting on the
following day in Vienna, Starhemberg likewise called upon
his listeners to prepare themselves for the "final war a-
gainst marxism."\textsuperscript{22} On January 31, 1934, Fey opened the cam-
paign against the Social Democrats by ousting their repre-
sentatives from the provincial parliament in Innsbruck. This
was followed by attacks on Social Democratic newspaper of-
fices and party headquarters in Innsbruck (February 5),
Linz, Graz, and Eisenstadt (February 6-7). On February 7,
1934, ostensibly as part of a weapons' search, the offices
of the \textit{Arbeiter Zeitung} in Vienna were raided.\textsuperscript{23}

Despite these police and Heimwehr provocations, losses
of life and property initially were kept to a minimum due
to the Social Democrats' failure to offer any serious re-
sistance to their assailants. Although plans existed for
the defense of party headquarters and newspaper offices and
for calling a general strike, the party's governing council

\textsuperscript{21} Neues Freie Presse, January 27, 1934 (Morgenblatt), p.
4; Julius Deutsch, \textit{Der Bürgerkrieg in Österreich} (Karlsbad,

\textsuperscript{22} Neues Freie Presse, January 29, 1934 (Morgensausgabe),
93.

\textsuperscript{23} Renner, \textit{Österreich von der Ersten zur Zweiten Repu-
blik}, p. 136; Sweet, "Mussolini and Dollfuß," p. 177.
was divided as to what measures should be taken. Some moderate elements of the council still felt that a compromise with Dollfuß could be arranged and were loath to initiate any action that might lead to a confrontation with the government. At a critical meeting in Vienna on February 8, 1934, the leadership of the Social Democratic Party decided to take no action, hoping to avoid that confrontation, and thereby postponed a decision on the situation until their next meeting on February 12.

Events were not to wait on the leaders of the Social Democratic Party. On February 10, 1934, Fey abolished the independent status of the Vienna police department, which previously had been directed by the Social Democratic mayor of Vienna, Dr. Karl Seitz, and placed it under his own ministry of interior. The following day the vice chancellor announced to a gathering of Heimwehr men near Vienna that they would shortly resume their "work" against the Social Democrats and that they could count on the full support of the government in their task. As if in fulfillment of

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25 Renner, Österreich von der Ersten zur Zweiten Republik, p. 137.


these remarks, violence broke out in Linz during the early morning hours of February 12, 1934, between the police, supported by the Heimwehr, and the Schutzbund. Following the example set by the clashes between government and socialist forces in Linz, sporadic fighting occurred in other parts of Austria. In Vienna, a general strike was called, whereupon riots erupted in several working class residential districts of the city. These outbreaks lasted three days and required the use of troops and artillery before they finally were quelled. The cost in human suffering amounted to over 300 dead and approximately 700 injured.28

Following the suppression of the socialist revolt in Vienna, the Dollfuß government acted quickly to insure that its opponents were thoroughly crushed throughout the country. On February 13, 1934, the Social Democratic Party was banned, and all socialist literature was confiscated. A systematic purge was made of all party members who held office in the federal, provincial, and local governments. Socialist trade unions were either abolished or integrated

28 A number of accounts have been written concerning the events of February 12-15, 1934. Socialist accounts include, Deutsch, Ein weiter Weg, pp. 197-223; Renner, Österreich von der Ersten zur Zweiten Republik, pp. 136-138; and Gullick, Austria from Habsburg to Hitler, Vol. II, pp. 1278-1308. Accounts that present the government's point of view may be found in Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini, pp. 118-123, and Schuschnigg, Dreimal Österreich (Vienna: Thomas Verlag, 1937), pp. 235-240. Other studies include Brook- Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, pp. 133-147; and Kreissler, Von der Revolution zur Annexion, pp. 225-231. The casualty figures have been taken from Schuschnigg, Dreimal Österreich, p. 237.
into Fatherland Front organizations. The government also used the revolt as a pretext to abolish Vienna's special status as a separate Austrian province and further moved to curtail the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the other provinces of the country. 29

The events of February 12-15, 1934, met with a variety of responses from abroad. Public opinion in both Great Britain and France strongly condemned the suppression of the Social Democrats. 30 The British government went so far as to inform Rome that Dollfuß' efforts to establish a fascist regime in Austria probably would lead to a "very marked cooling" in Anglo-Austrian relations. 31 Germany's reaction to events in Vienna, though also negative, was generally more reserved. Nazi leaders in both Austria and Germany assumed the role of "observers," deliberately avoiding involvement in the conflict in anticipation of being able to gain additional supporters from among the ranks of the defeated. 32

29 Neue Freie Presse, February 13, 1934 (Morgenblatt), p. 1; Selby to the British foreign office, Vienna, March 15, 1934, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. VI, pp. 524-529.

30 The Times (London), February 13, 1934, pp. 12 and 13; February 14, 1934, pp. 12 and 14; February 15, 1934, pp. 14 and 16; and February 16, 1934, p. 12; Le Temps, February 15, 1934, pp. 1-2; February 16, 1934, pp. 1-2; and February 17, 1934, p. 2.


32 The Times (London), February 15, 1934, p. 13; Von
In contrast to the negative response of the other major European powers, the Italian government and press viewed the suppression of the socialist revolt in Vienna "with favor." Despite the dubious role played by Dollfuß in these events, the results were in line with Italy's primary aims, as presented by Suvich to the Austrian chancellor during their meeting in January, 1934. The Social Democrats had been crushed, thereby removing not only a potential Nazi propaganda weapon but also the last force in Austria which could have aided Dollfuß in creating a government independent of Italian influence. As a result of these developments, Austria was isolated abroad; the suppression of the Social Democrats estranged public opinion in both Great Britain and France and caused relations with both governments to become noticeably cooler. The events of February, 1934, thus marked a decisive turning point in Austro-Italian relations; bereft of alternative sources of support, Dollfuß was irrevocably tied to Italy. All that remained was to formally underwrite these ties through the conclusion of an Austrian-Italian-Hungarian pact.


33 Consulate in Milan to the Austrian chancellery, Milan, February 21, 1934, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCLXXIX, No. 51,454, Fo. 684; consulate in Milan to the Austrian chancellery, Milan, March 3, 1934, ibid., No. 51,776, Fos. 691-694; The Times (London), February 15, 1934, p. 13.
The proposal for a meeting between the heads of government of Austria, Hungary, and Italy to underscore Italian preeminence in Austria and to solidify her position in Central Europe did not take long to materialize. Indeed, even before the suppression of the socialist revolt in Vienna, Suvich, in his letter of January 26, 1934, suggested the idea for such a conference to the Austrian chancellor.\textsuperscript{34} As envisioned by the Italian state secretary, this meeting of the three heads of government would be concerned primarily with the economic difficulties faced by Vienna, Budapest, and Rome.\textsuperscript{35} Dollfuß apparently conveyed these proposals to Gőmbőcs during his talks with the Hungarian leader in Budapest on February 7-9, 1934.\textsuperscript{36} Neither government made a definite response to the Italian suggestion at this time.

Following the successful suppression of the socialists in Vienna in February, 1934, the Palazzo Chigi's efforts to arrange a meeting between Austrian, Hungarian, and Italian leaders in Rome were greatly intensified. During his talks

\textsuperscript{34}Suvich to Dollfuß, [Rome, January 26, 1934], Sweet, "Mussolini and Dollfuß," p. 201.

\textsuperscript{35}Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, January 20, 1934, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy \textsuperscript{MSS.}, ser. T-120, Reel 3,300, Frames E578,501-E578,503.

\textsuperscript{36}Mackensen to the German foreign office, Budapest, February 9, 1934, \textit{ibid.}, Reel 3,391, Frame E605,310; Mackensen to the German foreign office, Budapest, February 11, 1934, \textit{ibid.}, Frames E605,313-E605,319.
with Gőmbös in Budapest on February 20-22, 1934, Suvich elaborated on the suggestions which previously had been conveyed to the Hungarian minister-president by Dollfuß. The Italian state secretary emphasized the importance of establishing closer economic ties between the three countries and even proposed the formation of a customs union. The need for firmer political ties between Rome, Vienna, and Budapest also received considerable attention, and the Italian diplomat suggested the conclusion of a consultative pact which would serve as a warning both to Germany and to the Little Entente against aggressive actions in Central Europe. Suvich's suggestions met with a mixed response from his Hungarian host. Although he approved of the Italian plans for a consultative pact and favored closer economic ties with Rome and Vienna, Gőmbös seriously objected to the Italian proposals for a customs union.

37 Mackensen to the German foreign office, Budapest, February 27, 1934, ibid., Reel 2,730, Frames H040,062-H040,067; Rieth to the German foreign office, Vienna, March 1, 1934, ibid., Frames H040,055-H040,059. Indeed, the idea of a customs union may have been discussed earlier by Suvich and Dollfuß. See Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, January 20, 1934, ibid., Reel 3,300, Frames E578,501-E578,503; Mackensen to the German foreign office, Budapest, February 9, 1934, ibid., Reel 3,391, Frame E605,310.

38 Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, February 22, 1934, ibid., Reel 3,300, Frames E578,716-E578,719; Rieth to the German foreign office, Vienna, March 1, 1934, ibid., Reel 2,730, Frames H040,055-H040,059.

39 Mackensen to the German foreign office, Budapest, February 27, 1934, ibid., Frames H040,062-H040,067; Rieth to the German foreign office, Vienna, March 1, 1934, ibid., Frames H040,055-H040,059; Hennet to the Austrian chancellery,
protests, coupled with the reservations expressed in Vienna about the proposed customs union, forced Rome to be satisfied with plans for the strengthening of existing economic agreements. Nevertheless, the principal Italian objective had been achieved; the foundations were laid for a meeting of the three heads of government in March, 1934.

The talks that took place between Mussolini, Gömbös, and Dollfuß in Rome on March 15-17, 1934, mark one of the more significant achievements of Italian foreign policy during the interwar years. The results of the conferences were formalized in three agreements, collectively known as the Rome Protocols. Economic matters were dealt with in the second and third protocols. The first of these two economic conventions entailed a series of bilateral treaty arrangements between the three partners which were designed to promote economic cooperation between them, whereas the second provided for a supplementary economic agreement between Italy and Austria. During the discussions which preceded the conclusion of these agreements, the Italian

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41 The texts of the three protocols concluded in Rome
negotiators again sought to win support for their customs union proposal but encountered stiff opposition from their Austrian and Hungarian counterparts. To avoid further difficulties, therefore, the details of these arrangements were left to a committee composed of experts from each of the three countries, which subsequently met in Rome.

The core of the Rome Protocols, however, was not to be found in its economic arrangements, but rather in its political provisions, as outlined in the first protocol. The arrangement had as its avowed goal the creation of "a genuine basis for wider cooperation with other [European] states." In order to achieve this end, the protocol provided for the establishment of a consultative pact between Italy, Austria, and Hungary, which, while recognizing the independence of each of the three states, called upon them to coordinate their foreign policies and to consult together whenever at least one of the three states felt it desirable. Though seemingly innocuous, since it emphasized the

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43 This meeting occurred in May, 1934. See Drummond to the British foreign office, Rome, May 12, 1934, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. VI, pp. 696-698.


45 Ibid.
formulation of a common approach in matters of mutual interest, the agreement provided Italy, the strongest of the three, with an opportunity to dominate both Austria and Hungary and to interfere in their affairs whenever she felt that such intervention was advantageous.⁴⁶

With the conclusion of the Rome Protocols, therefore, Mussolini achieved one of his primary foreign policy goals --the creation of an Italian-dominated bloc in Central Europe. Despite certain minor difficulties raised by their respective leaders,⁴⁷ both Austria and Hungary were now bound to Italy by close economic and political ties. The consultative agreement, which obliged the three states to meet together to coordinate their policies in areas of common interest, provided the means whereby Rome could insure that this unity was maintained. Beyond establishing Italian ascendency over Austria and Hungary, however, the Rome Protocols likewise served to enhance Italy's position in European affairs. With the creation of an Italian coalition in Central Europe, the French-dominated Little Entente no


⁴⁷Mackensen to the German foreign office, Budapest, March 22, 1934, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 2,730, Frames H040,342-H040,343; Bulow memorandum, Berlin, March 20, 1934, ibid.; Frames H040,149-H040,152; Hennet to the Austrian chancellery, Budapest, March 29, 1934, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton XX, No. 52,669, Fos. 131-134.
longer appeared as a serious threat to Rome's aspirations in that region. More significantly, Mussolini also felt that he was better able to deal with Germany. Although the duce had not altered his belief that Hitler might be persuaded to recognize Austria's independence and join his fascist coalition, the arrangements established by the Rome Protocols provided a potentially useful barrier to possible German expansion into Central and Southeastern Europe, should the need arise. 48

Yet, while the Italian foreign office had reason to congratulate itself upon the conclusion of the Rome Protocols, its success was not without certain flaws. Contrary to Mussolini's expectations, Berlin showed little inclination to join the recently formalized Italian-Austrian-Hungarian coalition in Central Europe. Hitler also remained unimpressed by the duce's efforts to win his acceptance of the Dollfuß government. Indeed, Italian efforts to build a strong fascist regime in Austria, rather than winning the German leader's applause, appeared as a direct challenge to his own plans in that country. 49 Berlin likewise was


suspicious of the motives behind the political and economic arrangements established by the Rome Protocols. Despite Italian protestations to the contrary, German leaders were inclined to believe that these arrangements were directed against the Reich.\textsuperscript{50}

At the same time, although he was greatly irritated by Italy's support of Dollfuß, Hitler was hesitant to undertake any drastic action in Central Europe which might offend Rome. The intensification of Nazi activities in Austria, the German foreign office indicated, only would oblige Mussolini to increase his aid to Dollfuß and might even force him to move towards a rapprochement with France.\textsuperscript{51} Under such circumstances, these officials warned, Germany would be excluded from Central European affairs and completely


\textsuperscript{51} The Italians apparently had consulted Paris about the Rome Protocols and had even secured French approval of the pacts. See Rieth to the German foreign office, Vienna, March 16, 1934, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 2,730, Frames H040,169-H040,174; embassy in London to the German foreign office, London, April 19, 1934, ibid., Reel 2,700, Frames H028,884-H028,890; Selby to the British foreign office, Vienna, March 11, 1934, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. VI, p. 343.
surrounded by potential enemies.\textsuperscript{52} Hitler consequently undertook several measures to avert this danger. In order to reduce tensions in Austria, he ordered a temporary halt to Nazi terrorism in that country. Party leaders were instructed to avoid clashes with the government and to concentrate their activities on building up their internal organizations.\textsuperscript{53} The diplomatic situation in Italy also required attention, and the German foreign office undertook to ease its difficulties with Rome.

German efforts to improve relations with Italy were greatly facilitated by a rather curious happenstance that occurred on March 28, 1934, little more than a week after the conclusion of the Rome Protocols. Von Papen, who was staying overnight in Rome before proceeding on to Naples for a short vacation, had a chance meeting with Mussolini at a special performance of the Royal Opera given in honor of the visiting Siamese royal couple.\textsuperscript{54} During discussions held that evening and the next morning, the German vice-chancellor took the opportunity to express to the duce Berlin's reservations concerning the recently concluded


\textsuperscript{54}Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, March 29, 1934, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. II, pp. 690-691.
triptartite pacts between Italy, Austria, and Hungary. Mussolini responded by assuring the German leader that these agreements were not directed against the Reich. Indeed, the duce continued, Italy earnestly desired closer cooperation with Germany in Central European affairs.\footnote{Ibid.; Von Hassell memorandum, Rome, April 3, 1934, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 704-707; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, March 29, 1934, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), \textit{Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS.}, ser. T-120, Reel 2,700, Frames H028,878-H028,879.}

At this point, Von Papen made a very significant suggestion. Would it not be possible, he asked, for the leaders of Italy and Germany to meet together to resolve their countries' differences? Mussolini appeared to have been favorably impressed by the proposal.\footnote{Ibid.} A tentative list of topics for discussion, including the disarmament question, the expansion of the Rome Protocols, and the Austrian question, was prepared. Venice also was selected as a possible site for the conference, and although no specific date was set, the duce indicated a preference for sometime in late April, 1934.\footnote{Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, March 29, 1934, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), \textit{Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS.}, ser. T-120, Reel 2,700, Frames H028,878-H028,879; Von Hassell memorandum, Rome, April 3, 1934, \textit{Documents on German Foreign Policy}, ser. C, Vol. II, pp. 704-707.}

Subsequent discussions between Rome and Berlin altered few points of Von Papen's initial suggestion except the proposed date of the talks, which, after several
postponements, finally was set for June 14-15, 1934. The list of topics to be discussed by the two leaders, though expanded to include an examination of both countries' relations with France and the Soviet Union, continued to center around Central European affairs—and especially around Italian-German interests in Austria. As the preparations for the conference progressed, however, the basic differences between Rome and Berlin once again began to appear. Whereas Italian officials were willing to admit that Austria was a "German state," they continued to insist that the Reich must recognize her independence. Mussolini also harbored the belief that Hitler could be persuaded to join his Central European coalition. Berlin, by contrast, hoped to convince Rome to moderate her position on Austria. Hitler was willing to concede that the issue was not pressing, but he, nonetheless, felt that Nazi influence in Austria must be expanded.


60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Bülow memorandum, [Berlin], April 9, [1934], ibid., pp. 728-730; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome,
to minimize these differences, believing that they might be successfully resolved if only the two dictators met face to face.

The first meeting between Hitler and Mussolini occurred in Venice on June 14, 1934, amid considerable pomp and well-orchestrated popular demonstrations. After the initial formalities, the two men and their staffs traveled to the Villa Pisani, a private residence at Stra that had been specially prepared for the conference. Despite Mussolini's endeavors to play the role of a gracious host, difficulties soon arose. The duce found his conciliatory efforts rudely brushed aside by Hitler during their first series of talks. Displaying an obvious lack of tact, the German leader immediately launched into a discussion of the Austrian question. Although he admitted that the problem was not acute, Hitler suggested that a number of changes would have to be made in order to resolve Austro-German differences. Dollfuß, he insisted, must be replaced by a man of "independent outlook," and new elections would have to be held. Following these elections, the German leader continued, a new


63 A humorous sidelight of the meeting was that, in making their preparations at the Villa Pisani, the Italians failed to take into account the mosquitoes that inhabited the nearby swamps. On the night of June 15, they suffered greatly for this oversight and were forced to transfer the conference back to Venice. See Kirkpatrick, Mussolini, A Study in Power, p. 290.
government would have to be formed, which would include leaders of the Nazi Party as well as members of the Christian Social-Heimwehr coalition.\textsuperscript{64} Mussolini, apparently stunned by these suggestions, at first made no reply to the German leader's remarks. Subsequently, however, he countered these demands by arguing that new elections could not be held in Austria while terrorism continued and by rejecting Nazi participation in the Austrian government so long as the close ties were maintained between the Austrian and the German National Socialist parties.\textsuperscript{65}

These basic differences in outlook between the two dictators persisted during the series of discussions held the next afternoon at the Alberoni Golf Course in Venice. Because the talks were conducted in private, little is known as to their precise substantive nature. The conversations apparently were not dull, however; indeed, Von Neurath reported that at one point Hitler and Mussolini "roared at one another like bulls."\textsuperscript{66} Although a number of subjects, ranging from disarmament to Austria, were

\textsuperscript{64}Von Neurath memorandum, Venice, June 15, 1934, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. III, pp. 10-12; Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluss, p. 92.

\textsuperscript{65}Ibid.; circular by the foreign minister, Berlin, June 16, 1934, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. III, pp. 18-19; Drummond to the British foreign office, Rome, June 20, 1934, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. VI, pp. 762-764.

\textsuperscript{66}Wiskemann, The Rome-Berlin Axis, p. 36.
discussed, no concrete agreements were formulated. The talks consequently ended on an inconclusive note which left both sides very unclear as to their actual results. On one hand, Mussolini felt that he had secured a promise from the German chancellor that force would not be used in solving the Austrian question and that Italy would be consulted before further actions were taken in that country. By contrast, Hitler came away from the meeting with the impression that he had received the duce's approval of his plans for an eventual Austro-German union.

Subsequent events would demonstrate the error of both points of view. The Italians, however, were the first to suffer the shock of disillusionment. Indeed, within three weeks after the conclusion of the Venice conference, many of the old doubts concerning Italian-German relations were again brought to the fore as a result of the Nazi leader's actions during the Röhm purge. Hitler's cold-blooded execution of a number of his closest collaborators on June


30, 1934, greatly shocked Mussolini and caused many Italian leaders to seriously question the extent to which the German chancellor could be trusted. The Nazi accusations that Dollfuß was involved with the S. A. leader in a plot to overthrow Hitler also served to infuriate the duce. The Italian foreign office, in a strongly worded note, indicated to Berlin that such attacks on the head of government of a friendly neighboring state were intolerable and had cast "a shadow over the days at Venice."70

Shocking as the Röhm purge may have appeared to Rome, however, it was of little consequence when compared with the storm of events that broke loose in Vienna less than a month later. At approximately 1 p.m. on July 25, 1934, a group of 154 Austrian National Socialists, disguised in police and army uniforms, seized the chancellery and several other locations in Vienna in an effort to overthrow the Dollfuß government.71 While they were initially successful

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69 Kirkpatrick, Mussolini, A Study in Power, p. 294.


in capturing certain key government buildings, the leaders of the putsch soon encountered difficulties. Dollfuß, warned an hour earlier of the Nazi plot, ordered the other members of his cabinet out of the building, thereby enabling them to avoid capture by the insurgents. Police and army units also were notified and, after some delay, sealed off the chancellery and the other centers of insurgent resistance. Following a five hour siege, the Nazis surrendered in exchange for a safe-conduct to the German frontier which had been negotiated with the assistance of the German envoy in Vienna, Kurt Rieth. This agreement was revoked, however, when Dollfuß' body was found in the chancellery. Having stayed behind in order to assist in organizing the defense of the building, he was wounded when he attempted to leave his office and died before the insurgents concluded their surrender agreement.

The news of the Nazi attempt to overthrow the Dollfuß government, followed by that of the death of the chancellor, burst like a bombshell in Rome. Although the putsch was not successful in its effort to topple the Austrian government, it, nonetheless, posed a serious threat to that country's security and independence. Rumors concerning an imminent German invasion of Austria were rampant in many official circles. In an effort to avert such a possibility,
Mussolini, therefore, dispatched four Italian army divisions to the Brenner Pass as an indication of Italy's determination to defend Austrian independence, even if it meant war with Germany. 72

Mussolini's dramatic gesture, accompanied by his renewed pledge to preserve Austrian independence, 73 marked a decisive turning point in Italian-German relations. Enraged by what he considered to be a violation of the understanding concerning Austria accepted by Hitler during their talks in Venice, the duce condemned both the German chancellor and the Nazis for the attack on the Austrian government and the "murder" of the Austrian chancellor. 74 Italian efforts at compromise with Germany consequently were brought to a close. The bitter facts of the abortive Nazi putsch in Vienna obliged Mussolini to give up his earlier belief that Italian-German differences over Austria could be resolved by compromise and that Germany might be

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72 The Times (London), July 27, 1934, p. 14; Villari, Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini, pp. 113-114; Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini, p. 164.

73 Telegram by Mussolini to Starhemberg, Riccione, July 26, 1934, National Archives (Washington, D.C.), Personal Papers of Benito Mussolini, Together with some Official Records of the Italian Foreign Office and Ministry of Culture, 1922-1944, Received by the Department of State, ser. T-586, Reel 453, Frame 028, 444; Mussolini, Scritti e discorsi, Vol. IX, p. 103.

persuaded to join his fascist coalition. Instead, the duce was forced to recognize that Germany was the chief threat to Italian interests in Central Europe and that decisive action had to be taken in order to check her expansion in that region. The Italian foreign office was instructed, therefore, to alter its revisionist policies and to seek to cultivate the friendship of Great Britain and France in order to insure that in the event of another crisis over Austria, Italy would not have to face Germany alone.
CHAPTER VI
THE ROAD TO STRESA

The abortive Nazi attempt to overthrow the Dollfuss government on July 25, 1934, was a significant watershed in Italian foreign policy. Viewed from the perspective of Mussolini's past involvement in Central European affairs, the Italian leader's actions in defense of Austrian independence reaffirmed Italy's hegemony in that region and testified to the solidarity of the fascist coalition established by the Rome Protocols. At the same time, however, the duce's apparent success in staving off any possible German move to support the Austrian Nazi putsch\(^1\) brought to light a basic weakness in Italian foreign policy that was a direct result of the Italian leader's past activities in Central Europe. Rome's earlier initiatives in Austria and Hungary had been successful in achieving the objective of an Italian-dominated bloc in that region. Yet, they also had led to her estrangement from Great Britain and France. The resulting isolation was keenly felt following Dollfuss'  

\(^1\)While it is open to question as to whether Hitler ever planned to intervene in favor of the Nazi insurgents in Vienna, the foreign reaction--and especially the Italian response--to these events obliged Hitler to disavow the putsch and to alter his approach to the Austrian question. See Franz von Papen, Memoirs, trans. by Brian Connell (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., 1952), pp. 337-343; Eichstätt, Von Dollfuss zu Hitler, pp. 56-57; Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluss, pp. 101-103; Maass, Assassination in Vienna, pp. 148-153; Ross, Hitler und Dollfuss, pp. 235-241. See
assassination when neither of these two powers supported Mussolini's stand in defense of Austria. Although Italy's staunch support of her northern neighbor was a source of pride to many Italians, her obvious isolation was of concern to her leaders, many of whom were uncertain of their ability to repeat this achievement in the future. Mussolini, consequently, was forced to recognize that his past policies in Central Europe—policies which largely were dependent on Italy's own resources—might not always be adequate to halt Nazi expansion in that region. In order to meet this danger, therefore, the Italian leader was obliged to relinquish his solitary protectorate over Austria and to work for the establishment of a multinational guarantee that would insure the preservation of the "status quo" in Central Europe.

This shift in Italian foreign policy toward a broad international approach to the problem of German expansion in the Danube region became apparent during the talks

also the discussion of Germany's reaction to the Italian response to the abortive Nazi putsch, post, pp. 151-152.

2 This attitude is most clearly manifested during Mussolini's talks with Starhemberg on August 11, 1934. See Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini, pp. 166-167. The tense and uncertain mood prevailing in Rome at the time is also evident in Von Hassell's reports. See Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, August 8, 1934, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. III, pp. 300-305; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, August 15, 1934, ibid., pp. 321-324; Bülow to state secretary Hans Heinrich Lammers, Berlin, August 22, 1934, ibid., pp. 353-356.
between Mussolini and Starhemberg held at an Austrian youth camp outside of Rome on August 11, 1934, less than three weeks after the assassination of Dollfuß. In his discussion of the abortive Nazi putsch, the Italian leader vented his anger against Hitler as the "murderer" of Dollfuß and assured the newly appointed Austrian vice chancellor of Italy's continued support of his country's independence.  

At the same time, however, Mussolini stressed the importance of arousing British and French interest in Central European affairs. Italy, he warned, might not always be able to check German aggression in that region without outside assistance. From the Italian point of view, therefore, the establishment of a multinational guarantee for Austria offered the best approach to ensuring her continued independence.

Similar suggestions were made to Kurt von Schuschnigg, Dollfuß' successor as chancellor of Austria, during his first meeting with the duce in Florence on August 21, 1934. The initial talks between the two leaders resulted in the reaffirmation of the Rome Protocols and in an Italian pledge of continued political and economic assistance for

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Austria. Both men also examined the question of broadening the international basis of support for Austria's independence. Schuschnigg's proposal for an appeal to the League of Nations against German interference in his country's internal affairs received Mussolini's sympathetic approval. Indeed, such a move probably was viewed by Rome as a useful step toward an international guarantee for Austria.

Mussolini's response to the assassination of Dollfuß and his subsequent efforts to secure British and French support for a multinational pact designed to protect Austria's independence were followed perhaps nowhere more closely than in Berlin. Hitler, caught partly unaware by

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5 Smend to the German foreign office, Rome, September 20, 1934, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 3,300, Frames E578,534-E578,536; Adrian Rotter, secretary of the Austrian consulate in Rome, to the Austrian foreign office, Rome, August 25, 1934, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCLIV, No. 57,199, Fo. 567; The Times (London), August 22, 1934, p. 10; Bullock, Austria, 1918-1938, pp. 274-275.

6 Smend to the German foreign office, Rome, August 31, 1934, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 2,700, Frames H028,962-H028,966; Selby to the British foreign office, Vienna, August 29, 1934, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. XII, pp. 51-52.

7 Although no direct evidence has been found to support this view, the fact that the Italian foreign office was already considering the idea of a multinational guarantee for Austria and her subsequent strong support of Schuschnigg's appeal to the Great Powers would tend to substantiate this outlook. Schuschnigg's appeal to the Great Powers is further discussed on pp. 155-157. See also Bülow to Lammers, Berlin, August 22, 1934, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. III, pp. 353-356.
the abortive Nazi putsch in Vienna, 8 was also disturbed by the duce’s transfer of Italian troops to the Austrian frontier. Unprepared for a war with Italy, the German chancellor was forced to dissociate himself from the Nazi failure in Vienna. The German government vigorously denounced the attack on the Austrian chancellery and promised to arrest any of the insurgents who crossed the border into the Reich. 9 The German minister in Vienna, Kurt Rieth, was promptly recalled for having compromised the Reich government by his efforts to secure a safe-conduct for the rebels to the Austro-German frontier. 10 Hitler also officially severed all connections between the German National Socialist Party and its Austrian counterpart and ordered that all Nazi terrorism in the latter country be brought to a halt. 11

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8 The question as to the exact extent of Hitler’s fore-knowledge of the events in Vienna is open to considerable debate. See Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß, pp. 96-97; Bichstädt, Von Dollfuß zu Hitler, pp. 51 and 56-57; and Maass, Assassination in Vienna, p. 151.


At the same time, Berlin undertook several new diplomatic initiatives in Vienna in an effort to bridge the chasm in relations between the two countries which had developed following the assassination of Dollfuß. On July 26, 1934, Hitler asked his former vice-chancellor, Franz von Papen, to go to Austria as Germany's "minister on special mission." Berlin assumed that because of his earlier friendship with Dollfuß and his close connections with a number of leading Austrian Catholics, Von Papen would be readily accepted by the Austrian government. The new minister's known opposition to the use of force in solving the Austrian question, Hitler apparently felt, also would enable him to appear more convincing in his advocacy of Germany's desire for friendly relations with that country.

Von Papen's efforts to improve Austro-German relations, however, met with only limited success during the first few months of his stay in Vienna. The Austrian government was initially very reluctant to grant formal recognition to the new German minister. Von Papen's commission had been prepared without consideration of the usual diplomatic formalities, and Vienna was irritated by Berlin's failure to

Papen to Bülow, Berlin, August 19, 1934, ibid., pp. 336-343; Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß, pp. 102-103.


13 Von Papen, Memoirs, p. 339; Eichstädt, Von Dollfuß zu Hitler, pp. 57-58; Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß, p. 104.
secure its approval before releasing the announcement of his "special mission" to the press.\textsuperscript{14} Italian objections to his appointment also caused the Austrian government to delay its accreditation of the former German vice-chancellor.\textsuperscript{15} Indeed, only after the German foreign office had indicated that it would consider Von Papen's rejection "as a declaration of diplomatic war" was he allowed to present his credentials to the Austrian president on August 16, 1934.\textsuperscript{16} Following his accreditation, the German minister continued to find that his efforts to soothe Austro-German relations were constantly thwarted. Von Papen was shunned by official circles, and his protestations of Germany's friendship and peaceful intentions toward Austria were disregarded as either lies or efforts at deception.\textsuperscript{17}

Berlin also undertook diplomatic initiatives in Rome in an effort to reduce the differences in relations with

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\textsuperscript{17}Memorandum by an official of Department II, Berlin, August 20, 1934, ibid., pp. 333-336; Selby to the British foreign office, Vienna, August 10, 1934, Documents on
Italy which had developed as a result of the recent events in Vienna. The German ambassador, Ulrich von Hassell, sought to persuade the Italian government that Reich officials had not been involved in the plot to overthrow the Dollfuß government and that Germany sincerely desired to reestablish friendly relations with Austria. Mussolini, however, was not moved by Berlin's efforts to soothe Italian-German relations; Rome had been deceived too often in the past to accept uncritically any new German assurances. Consequently, the Italian foreign office proceeded with its own efforts to ensure peace in Central Europe through the establishment of an international guarantee for Austria's independence.

The first significant developments leading toward the conclusion of a multinational pact on Austria occurred in

British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. XII, pp. 10-11.


19 This attitude is indicated by Mussolini's remarks in his speech of October 7, 1934, in Milan and in his comments to Schuschnigg in November, 1934, in Rome. See Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, October 12, 1934, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 2,700, Frames H029,010-H029,013; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, November 11, 1934, ibid., Frames H029,110-H029,117. An indication of the general state of Italian-German relations can be found in Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, August 8, 1934, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. III, pp. 300-305; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, October 23, 1934, ibid., pp. 523-525.
early September, 1934, following Schuschnigg's appeal to the Great Powers for assistance against German interference in his country's affairs. The request, made with Italian support, asked that the British, French, and Italian governments reaffirm their interest in Austria's independence and pledge to lend her assistance should she be threatened by an outside power (i.e., Germany).\footnote{Patteson, British envoy in Geneva, to the British foreign office, Geneva, September 14, 1934, \textit{Documents on British Foreign Policy}, 2nd ser., Vol. XII, p. 91; Patteson to the British foreign office, Geneva, September 17, 1934, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 97-99.}

The proposal met with a mixed response from the two Western European Powers. Whereas France indicated an interest in an international agreement on Austria, Great Britain was less favorable in her reply to Schuschnigg's appeal.\footnote{Sir George Russell Clerk, Ambassador to France, to the British foreign office, Paris, September 12, 1934, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 87-88; Patteson to the British foreign office, Geneva, September 15, 1934, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 91-92; Patteson to the British foreign office, Geneva, September 17, 1934, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 97-99.}


The British government particularly objected to the proposal that the three states undertake to assist Austria militarily, should her independence be threatened. Subsequent efforts to arrange a compromise on this point resulted in failure; London resolutely refused to assume any new commitments in Central Europe.\footnote{British foreign office to Selby, London, September 20, 1934, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 105-109; memorandum by Simon, London, September 24, 1934, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 115-116.} Despite these difficulties, however, Italian
endeavors to secure a guarantee for Austria were not totally wasted. As a result of these negotiations, Great Britain joined with Italy and France on September 27, 1934, in a declaration which indicated the continued interest of the three powers in Austria’s independence and reaffirmed their earlier joint statement of February 17, 1934.  

While it marked an advance in the direction favored by Rome, the September, 1934, three-power declaration obviously fell short of Mussolini’s original expectations for an agreement that would protect Austria from Nazi aggression and thereby check German expansion in Central Europe. Italian efforts to include in the pronouncement a promise of military assistance to Austria in the event of a German attack had been stymied by the British refusal to undertake any additional commitments on the European continent. Yet, despite this setback, Italian officials had reason to be optimistic about the future of their plans for Austria. Although Anglo-Italian talks had yielded only meager results, Franco-Italian discussions had been more fruitful. The French government, aware of the dangers of German expansion in Central Europe, had indicated an interest in the Italian plans for that region. This more favorable response from Paris, coupled with the general improvement in relations  

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between the two countries over the last several months, 24 provided an atmosphere that was potentially conducive to expanded Franco-Italian collaboration in European affairs and to the conclusion of a broader international agreement on Austria.

The prospects for closer cooperation between Rome and Paris were further enhanced as a result of a series of meetings held between Mussolini and Pierre Laval, the French foreign minister, in the Italian capital on January 4-8, 1935. The talks were intended to serve as a forum for the examination of matters of mutual interest and for the clarification of a number of outstanding Franco-Italian differences. Difficulties between the two countries in North Africa and in Ethiopia were successfully resolved. 25

24 Franco-Italian relations had begun to improve as early as March, 1934, when Paris displayed a favorable attitude toward Italian policies in Central Europe (i.e. the Rome Protocols). See Rieth to the German foreign office, Vienna, March 16, 1934, National Archives (Washington, D.C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 2,730, Frames H040,169-H040,174; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, March 29, 1934, ibid., Frames H040,380-H040,381; Selby to the British foreign office, Vienna, March 11, 1934, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. VI, p. 542. This trend continued, as indicated by the talks over Austria in Geneva in September, 1934, and by the subsequent discussions between Rome and Paris in preparation for the Mussolini-Laval meeting in Rome in January, 1935. See Dirk Forster, press attaché at the embassy in Rome, to the German foreign office, Rome, December 30, 1934, National Archives (Washington, D.C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 3,285, Frames E567,418-E567,419; and Drummond to the British foreign office, Rome, December 14, 1934, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. XII, pp. 324-325.

25 Köpke memorandum, Berlin, January 10, 1935, National
Of greater significance, however, was the fact that French and Italian leaders were able to agree upon a common approach to Central European affairs and to the solution of the disarmament question. With regard to Austria, the two leaders signed a protocol which recommended the conclusion of a nonintervention pact between her and her neighbors which was to include Italy, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Yugoslavia, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, and France. The agreement would prohibit each state from either interfering in the internal affairs of any of the others or supporting any organization on its territory which espoused these goals. Until such time as a pact of this nature could be concluded, Italy and France agreed to consult together in the event a threat to Austria's independence were to develop.26 In turning to the disarmament question, the two powers indicated their willingness to recognize Germany's theoretical "equality of rights" in armament matters but denounced any

unilateral change in the Treaty of Versailles.\textsuperscript{27}

The agreements signed by Italy and France in January, 1935, to use the words of one German observer, marked "a political event of the highest order."\textsuperscript{28} Several of the more outstanding differences that had troubled relations between the two countries for more than half a century were successfully resolved. More significantly, however, the meeting set the tone for what promised to be a new era of Franco-Italian cooperation in European affairs. The joint declarations issued in Rome also provided the basis for a broad international guarantee of Austrian independence and served as a warning against German aggression in Central Europe.\textsuperscript{29}

Efforts to achieve a multinational agreement on Austria were advanced yet another step as a result of the discussions held between representatives of the French and British governments in London on February 1-3, 1935. The talks were intended as a means of preparing the groundwork for a


\textsuperscript{28}Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, January 10, 1935, \textit{ibid.}, Frame E567,532.

\textsuperscript{29}These implications were clearly recognized in Berlin. See \textit{ibid.}, Frames E567,532-E567,535; [Bülow] memorandum, Berlin, January 23, 1934 [sic], Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. III, pp. 852-857.
general understanding which would ensure European peace and security. Consequently, a wide range of issues was examined. In this context, the results of the recent Franco-Italian talks in Rome were of particular interest to the leaders of both countries. The French, represented by Premier Pierre Flandin and Laval, suggested the extension of these agreements to include Great Britain. The British delegation, headed by Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin, the Lord President of the Council, was reluctant to assume any additional commitments on the European continent. As a compromise, however, MacDonald declared that the British government would "associate itself" with the spirit of the Franco-Italian declarations and would agree to "consider [itself] to be among the powers which will...consult together if the independence and integrity of Austria are menaced." At the same time, both governments also issued a declaration warning against the unilateral abrogation by any power of the armaments provisions of the Paris peace treaties. The foundations

30 These subjects included the armaments question, Germany's return to the League, an Eastern European Pact, and a Central European (Austrian) Pact. See notes of Anglo-French conversations, London, February 1-3, 1935, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. XII, pp. 458-469.

31 Ibid.


33 Ibid.
for further joint British, French, and Italian cooperation thus were laid.

The results of the Franco-Italian and Anglo-French discussions did not go unnoticed in Berlin. The German foreign office was keenly aware of the fact that the pronouncements which had been made in Rome and in London concerning Austrian independence and the disarmament provisions of the Paris peace settlement were directed against the Reich. For the moment, however, it sought to avoid a confrontation with the other three European powers, fearing that such a move would force them into a closer coalition which would leave Germany isolated and outnumbered. Instead, the Wilhelmstraße undertook to obstruct Italian, French, and British efforts at cooperation in Central Europe. Thus, while the German government indicated its interest in the plans for an international guarantee for Austria, it used the subsequent negotiations to raise a number of technical objections in a deliberate effort to subvert the Franco-


Italian proposals.\textsuperscript{36}

Despite German attempts to undermine their endeavors at cooperation, however, subsequent events tended to encourage the development of closer ties between Italy, France, and Great Britain. In an effort to stabilize Austro-French and Austro-British relations and to encourage the development of an Anglo-French-Italian coalition, Schuschnigg visited both Paris and London in late February, 1935.\textsuperscript{37} During his discussions with French and British leaders, the chancellor attempted to ameliorate the unfavorable image of the Austrian government that had become widespread in both countries following the suppression of the Social Democrats. At the same time, Schuschnigg also sought to impress upon his hosts the extent of the danger posed by Germany to Austria's security.\textsuperscript{38} In Paris, these


\textsuperscript{37} Schuschnigg was in Paris from February 21-24, 1935, and in London from February 24-26, 1935.

efforts generally met with success. The French government, in a communique issued on February 24, 1935, reaffirmed its interest in a multinational pact on Austria. Officials at the Quai d'Orsay further indicated their support for Schuschnigg's plans to expand the Austrian army and promised to assist his country in solving its economic difficulties.\textsuperscript{39} In London, discussions followed a similar pattern. Although his reception in Great Britain was rather subdued, Schuschnigg once again was assured by that country's leaders of their continued concern for Austria's independence.\textsuperscript{40}

The trend toward Anglo-French-Italian cooperation in Central European affairs, strengthened by the Austrian chancellor's visits to Paris and London, was further reinforced by events in Berlin. On March 16, 1935, Hitler surprised the world by his announcement of the reinstitution of universal military service in Germany.\textsuperscript{41} During his subsequent

\textsuperscript{39} German ambassador in France to the German foreign office, Paris, March 5, 1935, ibid., Frames E605,095-E605,100; Köpke memorandum, Berlin, March 12, 1935, ibid., Frames E605,127-E605,132; The Times (London), February 25, 1935, p. 12.


talks with foreign diplomats, the German chancellor outlined
his plans to build an air force equal in size to that of
either Great Britain or France and to expand the size of
the German fleet.42 Hitler justified these actions in light
of the recent revision of the French army law43 and sug-
gested that if the other powers had adhered to the pro-
visions of the Versailles settlement—and reduced the size
of their armed forces—it would have been unnecessary for
Germany to rearm.44

Hitler's announcement of March 16, 1935, elicited a
series of shocked and angry responses from Paris, London,
and Rome. A violation of the disarmament clauses of the
Treaty of Versailles, the German action also contradicted
the recent Franco-Italian and Anglo-French pronouncements
that had rejected the unilateral abrogation of any portion
of the peace treaties which had ended the First World War.
Suvich, in his discussion with the British ambassador, took

13 and 14; Le Temps, March 18, 1935, p. 1; March 19, 1935,
pp. 1-2; March 20, 1935, pp. 1-2; March 22, 1935, pp. 1-2
and 3; and March 23, 1935, pp. 1-2; The New York Times,
March 17, 1935, pp. 1, 30, and 31; and March 18, 1935, pp.
1, 7, and 9.

42 Phipps to the British foreign office, Berlin, March
16, 1935, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser.,
Vol. XII, pp. 646-647.

43 The French army law passed on March 15, 1935, ex-
tended the length of time that conscripts were required to
serve in the army from one year to two years.

2, pp. 491-494; The Times (London), March 15, 1935, p. 12.
a "very serious" view of the situation and suggested that by her violation of the Versailles settlement, Germany had placed herself "outside of the law." The French government was equally critical of Hitler's actions, and on March 20, 1935, it requested a special session of the League of Nations Council to examine what steps should be taken in response to Germany's rearmament. Both Rome and Paris, however, refrained from taking any drastic action against Germany, preferring to delay such a move until after the visit of the British foreign minister, Sir John Simon, to Berlin.

Simon's talks with Hitler on March 25-26, 1935, while providing a means of airing a number of issues that troubled relations between Germany and the three other European powers, unfortunately failed to reduce any of the tensions which had developed following the announcement of the Reich's rearmament. Although he repeatedly affirmed his desire for peace, the Nazi leader steadfastly refused to alter his plans for the expansion of Germany's armed forces.

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Nor was he very encouraging in his remarks to the British foreign minister concerning the proposal for an international guarantee of Austria's independence. Hitler readily conceded that Germany had no objections in theory to the Franco-Italian plan but expressed a number of reservations concerning the details of the suggested nonintervention pact. Simon consequently left Berlin with very little to show for his talks with the German chancellor. Indeed, during his subsequent stopover in Paris the British foreign minister appears to have left French and Italian diplomats with the impression that the trip had "proved entirely nugatory and that prospects for a negotiated settlement were equally in vain."  

Faced with the meager results of Simon's trip to Berlin and the ominous threat of German rearmament, the leaders of Italy, France, and Great Britain met at Stresa on April 11-14, 1935. In an effort to resolve their outstanding differences and to prepare a common approach to the problems of European peace, Mussolini, Flandin, and MacDonald carefully reexamined a wide range of issues. Foremost among

48 Ibid., pp. 1057-1060; Vollgruber to the Austrian foreign office, Rome, March 31, 1935, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXIV, No. 32,936, Fo. 595.

them was the problem posed by Hitler's announcement of his plans to expand Germany's armed forces. The French immediately proposed a joint resolution to be presented to the League of Nations Council which condemned Hitler's violation of the Versailles peace settlement and called for the implementation of sanctions against the Reich.\(^50\) The British and Italian governments, though agreeing in principle with the French resolution, expressed reservations concerning the imposition of sanctions. The British, particularly, desired to avoid an overly harsh condemnation of the Nazi leader's actions, fearing that such a move might precipitate a confrontation with Germany.\(^51\) The resulting declaration, presented to the Council on April 17, 1935, consequently condemned Germany's unilateral violation of her treaty obligations and suggested that "all applicable measures" be taken against her, but left the decision as to the precise nature of these "applicable measures" to the individual member states.\(^52\)

The Stresa conference also dealt in great detail with the problem of an international guarantee for Austria. The

\(^{50}\) Notes of Anglo-French-Italian conversations, Stresa, April 11-14, 1935, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. XII, p. 873.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., pp. 873-877; Reports from Stresa by Dr. Fuchs, to the Austrian foreign office, Stresa, April 10-13, 1935, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCLXXXI, no document number, Fos. II.435-II.436.

\(^{52}\) Notes of Anglo-French-Italian conversations, Stresa, April 11-14, 1935, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser. Vol. XII, pp. 878-879 and 892, n. 27.
Italian and French leaders once again presented their proposal for a nonintervention pact designed to prevent outside interference in Austria's domestic affairs.\textsuperscript{53} The British did not object to this plan in theory, but they refused to undertake any additional military commitments in Central Europe. The resulting statement concerning Austria, therefore, was limited to a reaffirmation of the joint declaration of September 27, 1934. Each of the three powers acknowledged the importance of Austria's continued independence and pledged to consult together if her security were endangered.\textsuperscript{54} Plans also were made for a subsequent conference to be held in Rome that would deal more precisely with the problems of securing the independence and territorial integrity of the states of the Danube Basin.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., pp. 886-887 and 893; reports from Stresa by Dr. Fuchs, to the Austrian foreign office, Stresa, April 10-13, 1935, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCLXXXI, no document number, Fos. 11,431-11,434. The Franco-Italian nonintervention proposal mentioned above refers to the plan prepared at the Mussolini-Laval conference in January, 1935. See ante, p. 159.

\textsuperscript{54} Notes of Anglo-French-Italian conversations, Stresa, April 11-14, 1935, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. XII, p. 893, n. 28; The Times (London), April 15, 1935, p. 14.

\textsuperscript{55} Notes of Anglo-French-Italian conversations, Stresa, April 11-14, 1935, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. XII, p. 893, n. 28; reports from Stresa by Dr. Fuchs, to the Austrian foreign office, Stresa, April 10-13, 1935, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCLXXXI, no document number, Fos. 11,424-11,427 and 11,429-11,430; Egger-Höllwald to the Austrian foreign office, Paris, April 18, 1935, ibid., No. 33,628. Such a conference was never held due to the collapse of the Stresa partnership.
The results of the Stresa conference thus reaffirmed the trend toward closer Anglo-French-Italian cooperation in European affairs that had been developing since the fall of 1934. The declarations issued by the three powers at the conclusion of their talks once again confirmed their interest in Austrian independence, denounced Germany's unilateral violation of the Versailles peace settlement, and presented a number of proposals designed to ensure European peace. Yet, perhaps because it marked the first time that the three heads of government had met and acted together, the Stresa conference also created an image of solidarity between Great Britain, France, and Italy which previously had been lacking. Indeed, the strongly worded denunciation of German rearmament, coupled with the pledge of solidarity among the three powers in meeting any new unilateral treaty violations, created the outward appearance of a "common front" against Hitler's Reich. While the statesmen at Stresa realized that it was impossible to halt the German rearmament program, they—along with public opinion


57 Notes of Anglo-French-Italian conversations, Stresa, April 11-14, 1935, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., Vol. XII, pp. 910-911, n. 45.

58 This is apparent from the discussions at Stresa; see
throughout most of Europe—hoped that their declarations would serve as a deterrent against further German threats to European peace.

Beyond its more general implications, however, the results of the Stresa conference also had an immediate impact in both Berlin and Vienna. The Wilhelmstraße was infuriated by the results of the three-power talks and condemned the denunciation of German rearmament—approved by the League of Nations Council on April 17, 1935—as a "new case of discrimination against Germany." Berlin further questioned the right of the British, French, and Italian governments to "constitute themselves as judges against Germany," especially since they too had failed to live up to the terms of the Versailles peace settlement. At the same time, however, Hitler was careful to confine his response to the League of Nations' resolution to words and not deeds. Unable to challenge the "front" established at Stresa, the Nazi leader was forced to bide his time until

ibid., pp. 865, 890-892, and 904-906.


the prevailing constellation of European powers was altered. In contrast to Berlin, Vienna was very pleased with the results of the Stresa talks and with the League of Nations condemnation of German rearmament. The appearance of a joint British-French-Italian bloc tended to encourage the Austrian government to resist German pressures for an Austro-German pact. Consequently, the favorable remarks contained in Hitler's speech of May 21, 1935, assuring Austria that Germany had no intention of interfering in her domestic affairs failed to arouse a positive response in Vienna. Von Papen's efforts to "normalize" relations between the two countries through an agreement designed to resolve their major differences also were ignored. Protected by the apparent strength of its agreements with Italy and the recent pronouncements of the Stresa conference, the Austrian government saw little need for compromise with Germany. Regrettably, the foundation on


which Austria's leaders built their hopes for their country's survival proved to be less durable than it first appeared.
CHAPTER VII
THE FORMATION OF THE ROME-BERLIN AXIS

The talks held at Stresa on April 11-15, 1935, marked the culmination of British, French, and Italian efforts to achieve a common approach to the problems that threatened European peace and security. The apparent solidarity between these three states, demonstrated by their denunciation of German rearmament and by their pledge to oppose any new unilateral treaty violations, promised to provide a strong bulwark against Hitler's expansionist aspirations. Had this coalition of Great Powers been maintained, the subsequent course of European history might have been substantially altered. This unity was not sustained, however. Indeed, differences between the three powers became apparent shortly after the meetings at Stresa were concluded. The persistent divergences of opinion between British and French officials over the implementation of sanctions against Germany threatened to undermine the "common front" established at the conference. British, French, and Italian leaders also found that their efforts to achieve a solution to the problems of the Danube Basin faced significant obstacles as a result of the numerous differences among the states of that region.¹ While these underlying problems in themselves

¹Report by the chancellery political director, Vienna, April 17, 1935, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Ar-
were not serious enough to disrupt the efforts at cooperation between Rome, Paris, and London or to mar the public image of unity that emerged from the April, 1935, talks, they, nonetheless, aroused doubts within diplomatic circles as to the viability of the agreements concluded at Stresa.\textsuperscript{2}

The first important test of the Anglo-French-Italian coalition occurred less than a month after the Stresa talks with the conclusion of a Franco-Russian mutual assistance treaty on May 2, 1935.\textsuperscript{3} The agreement was an important step in French plans to build a system of alliances that would preserve the "status quo" in Eastern Europe, and consequently it initially received the approval of both Italy and Great Britain.\textsuperscript{4} Indeed, in its discussion of

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\textsuperscript{2}Report by the chancellery political director, Vienna, April 17, 1935, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCLXXXI, No. 33,576.


\textsuperscript{4}Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, May 10, 1935, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol.
this pact with the Wilhelmstraße, the Palazzo Chigi supported the French position that the Franco-Russian accord was not directed against Germany and rejected the German contention that it was a violation of the Treaty of Locarno.\textsuperscript{5}

The subsequent conclusion of a Russo-Czechoslovakian mutual assistance agreement on May 16, 1935, however, resulted in a definite shift in Mussolini's attitude toward these new French sponsored initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe. The Italian leader apparently feared the expansion of French and Russian influence in these areas and consequently began to question whether these two agreements were in accord with Italian interests.\textsuperscript{6}

The unity of the three Stresa powers was further undermined by the conclusion of an Anglo-German Naval Agreement on June 18, 1935. The treaty, by allowing Germany to build a fleet with a tonnage of up to 35 per cent of that of Great Britain,\textsuperscript{7} in effect legitimized German rearmament and


\textsuperscript{7}Unsigned memorandum, [London], June 23, 1935, \textit{ibid.}
thereby set aside one of the principal tenets of the Stresa declarations. By failing to notify either Paris or Rome about the details of the Anglo-German negotiations the British government also weakened the spirit of cooperation between the three powers. Both the French and the Italian governments questioned the procedure followed by the British in unilaterally negotiating with Germany and expressed their irritation with this obvious betrayal of the Stresa accords. In Rome, Italian leaders began to doubt whether Great Britain could be relied upon to fight for European peace unless her own immediate interests were involved.

Yet it was an Italian action—the precipitation of a

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8 The position taken by the British, French, and Italian governments at Stresa was that German rearmament was illegal unless a negotiated settlement was reached under the auspices of the League of Nations that modified the pertinent sections of the Treaty of Versailles. See ante, pp. 167-168. See also Kirkpatrick, Mussolini, A Study in Power, p. 311.


10 Kirkpatrick, Mussolini, A Study in Power, p. 311; Hibbert, Benito Mussolini, p. 73.
war in Ethiopia—that ultimately presented the greatest threat to the continued stability of the Stresa coalition. Ethiopia had been of interest to Italy for over half a century. Beginning in the late 1860's, Italian traders sought to develop commercial connections in that area. Following her exclusion from Tunisia in 1881, Italy looked to Ethiopia as the only region in Africa still open to European expansion. In 1890 the colony of Eritrea was established and the settlement of Italian Somaliland begun. Subsequent Italian efforts to extend her influence over all of Ethiopia were checked, however, when an Italian army was routed by Ethiopian troops at the Battle of Aduwa in March, 1896. Although Italy retained most of her economic concessions in Ethiopia, the defeat at Aduwa forced her leaders to set aside their plans for the conquest of that country.\footnote{Useful studies of the early history of Italy's involvement in Ethiopia may be found in James Dugan and Laurence Lafore, Days of Emperor and Clown: The Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1936 (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1973), pp. 5-57; George W. Baer, The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 1-24.}

Italian interest in Ethiopia was revived in late 1933.\footnote{Although some officials in the Italian ministry of colonies were always interested in Ethiopia, Mussolini did not give the matter serious attention until the fall of 1933. See Baer, The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War, p. 35; Dugan and Lafore, Days of Emperor and Clown, pp. 95-100; Geoffrey T. Garratt, Mussolini's Roman Empire (New York: Bobbs-Merril Company, 1938), pp. 31-39; and Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, pp. 296.} Mussolini, beset by domestic difficulties resulting
from falling agricultural prices, declining industrial production, and rising unemployment, became interested in the idea of overseas expansion as a means of bolstering his public image and of enhancing his country's international prestige. Because of Italy's extensive economic investments and her earlier dealings in that country, Ethiopia naturally became the primary target of the duce's ambitions. Initially, Mussolini's colonial plans were very ill-defined. Whereas he desired extensive economic and territorial concessions from Ethiopia, it is doubtful that the Italian leader envisioned the conquest of the entire country. The rapid expansion of German power in 1934, however, impressed upon the duce the need for immediate action in Africa before the danger of a European conflict became acute. Following his successful defense of Austria in July, 1934, Mussolini, therefore, began to strengthen the garrisons in Eritrea and Italian Somaliland so as to be able to take advantage of any opportunity to expand Italian influence in that region.

The Italian leader did not have to wait long for an incident that would provide him with an excuse for intervention in East Africa. On December 4, 1934, an unexpected

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13Dugan and Lefore, Days of Emperor and Clown, p. 100; Baer, The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War, pp. 35-44.

clash occurred between Italian and Ethiopian forces at Walwal, an isolated oasis along the undemarcated border between Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia. After a preliminary exchange of charges and countercharges, both sides agreed to arbitrate the dispute. The Italians, however, deliberately sought to protract the negotiations for as long as possible in order to allow for the massing of troops in their East African colonies in preparation for the invasion of Ethiopia that eventually was launched on October 3, 1935. During the intervening ten months, Mussolini sought to win international acceptance of his plans to seize the eastern and northern portions of the country which only recently had been brought under Ethiopian control.

The Italian leader turned first to France for approval of his expansionist plans. During the meetings between Mussolini and Laval on January 4-8, 1935, colonial matters were thoroughly discussed. In an effort to resolve a number of long standing differences, the duce made several significant concessions to the French leader involving Italian claims in Tunisia, Libya, and East Africa. Italy renounced the special privileges enjoyed by her citizens in Tunisia under the Franco-Italian Conventions of 1896.

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15 A thorough study of the Walwal incident can be found in Baer, The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War, pp. 45-61. See also Dugan and Lafore, Days of Emperor and Clown, pp. 85-92 and 101-104; Villari, Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini, pp. 127-128; and Garrett, Mussolini's Roman Empire, pp. 62-65.

16 Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, Jan-
She also abandoned her extensive territorial claims under the 1915 London Agreements and accepted as compensation two small strips of desert on the western borders of Libya and Eritrea and the islet of Dumeria in the Red Sea. In exchange for these concessions, Mussolini sought from the French leader a free hand for his plans in Ethiopia. Although differences of opinion subsequently developed as to whether Laval actually approved an Italian invasion of that country, he apparently raised no objections to the duce's proposals during their January meetings. Consequently, Mussolini came away from these talks confident that France would not seek to block Italian economic or political penetration of Ethiopia.


18 The extent of Laval's concessions to Italy concerning Ethiopia has been the subject of considerable controversy, and, since no written record of the conversations between Mussolini and Laval was made, it is unlikely that the differences over this matter will ever be entirely
The Palazzo Chigi also made efforts in early January, 1935, to sound out the British government concerning its attitude toward Italian plans for Ethiopia. Rome recognized that London's acquiescence was vital if efforts to expand Italian influence in East Africa were to have any chance of success. The British foreign office was aware of the fact that "the Italians intended to take Abyssinia," but because government leaders did not want to offend Italy or to sacrifice her friendship, only vague responses were made to Rome's inquiries concerning the Ethiopian question. Thus, Mussolini was led to believe that he had British, as well as French, approval for his colonial plans. 

The discussions at Stresa in April, 1935, also tended to confirm the Italian leader's impressions that the British and French were not particularly concerned about his resolved. Nonetheless, most evidence tends to indicate that the French government approved of Mussolini's plans and that it was kept rather well informed of the subsequent development of Italian aims in that country throughout the summer of 1935. See William C. Askew, "The Secret Agreement between France and Italy on Ethiopia, January, 1935," The Journal of Modern History, Vol. XXV (1953), pp. 47-48; Baer, The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War, pp. 76-86; Dugan and Lafore, Days of Emperor and Clown, pp. 106-108; Villari, Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini, p. 124; and Wiskemann, The Rome-Berlin Axis, p. 43. Von Hassell's speculations concerning the Mussolini-Laval talks also support this view. See Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, January 10, 1935, National Archives (Washington, D.C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 3,285, Frame E567,531.  

19Baer, The Coming of the Italian Ethiopian War, p. 91.  
20Ibid., pp. 88-92; Dugan and Lafore, Days of Emperor and Clown, p. 108.
activities in Ethiopia. Mussolini came to the conference prepared to discuss his aspirations in that country with his British and French counterparts, and, if necessary, to negotiate with them Italy's demands for economic and territorial concessions.\footnote{Baer, \textit{The Coming of the Italian Ethiopian War}, pp. 118-119.} Much to his surprise, neither Flandin nor MacDonald mentioned the matter of Italy's involvement in East Africa. Nor did the duce's veiled references to the Ethiopian question during the discussions arouse any negative responses among the British or the French delegates. The French apparently reaffirmed the position they had taken in January, 1935; the British remained silent, even though they were fully aware of the implications of the Italian leader's remarks.\footnote{Horthy, \textit{Memoirs}, p. 138; Baer, \textit{The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War}, pp. 120-122 and 127-128; Kirkpatrick, \textit{Mussolini, A Study in Power}, p. 303; Wiskemann, \textit{The Rome-Berlin Axis}, p. 43; Hibbert, \textit{Benito Mussolini}, pp. 72-73.}

The outcome of the Stresa talks had a decisive impact on Mussolini's subsequent actions concerning Ethiopia. Believing that he had British and French approval for his expansionist plans, the duce undertook to involve the entire Italian nation in his East African project. As a result of an intense propaganda campaign, the Italian people were led to believe that the acquisition of economic and territorial concessions in Ethiopia would solve all of the country's domestic problems. Italian economic experts portrayed
Ethiopia as a potentially rich country which could easily provide Italy with both a source of raw materials for her industry and a market for her manufactured goods. Nationalist speakers also sought to arouse support for a possible war in East Africa by reminding the public of Italy's past martial glories during the days of the Roman empire and by insisting upon the need to revenge Italy's defeat at Aduwa. These press and polemical endeavors were brought to a culmination by Mussolini in his foreign policy speech before the Italian Chamber of Deputies on May 25, 1935. In his discussion of the situation in Ethiopia, the fascist dictator clearly indicated that Italy was prepared to go to war to achieve her goals in that country and further warned that she would base her future relations with other European powers on their response to her demands for economic and political concessions in East Africa. Italy, thus, was publicly committed to the duce's colonial venture.

Shortly after he had pledged his regime to the forceful expansion of Italian influence in Ethiopia, the Italian leader, however, suddenly found that his basic assumption concerning Great Britain's acquiescence in these plans was in error. Eden, during a visit to Rome on June 22-25,

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1935, surprised the duce by raising a number of disagreeable points concerning his East African plans. The British minister explained that the London government, faced with a general election in the fall and under pressure from supporters of the League of Nations (the Peace Ballot movement), could not condone an Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Instead, Eden suggested a compromise solution which would give Italy Ogdaden province and certain vaguely defined economic concessions in the remainder of the country. Mussolini rejected these proposals as entirely inadequate and insisted that Italy be given all the areas not belonging to the traditional Amharic kingdom as well as effective control over the rest of Ethiopia. The duce further rejected Eden's warning concerning the possibility of intervention by the League of Nations in the Ethiopian question and hinted that, if she were confronted with such a situation, Italy was prepared to leave that organization.**

**Additional information on the Peace Ballot movement can be found in Baer, The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War, pp. 201-207; Dugan and Lafore, Days of Emperor and Clown, pp. 130-131; Garrett, Mussolini's Roman Empire, p. 78; and Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, p. 178.

Subsequent talks between British, French, and Italian leaders in Paris on August 16-24, 1935, also failed to achieve a solution to Italian-Ethiopian differences. Through its envoy to the League of Nations, Baron Pompeo Aloisi, the Italian government put forward many of the same demands that Mussolini had outlined two months earlier. These proposals were rejected by Eden and Laval, who, in turn, attempted to persuade the Italians to accept a compromise solution.27 These negotiations were continued in Geneva in September, 1935, under the auspices of the League of Nations but failed to produce any positive results.28 On October 3, 1935, the three-power talks were abruptly brought to a close as a result of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia.

The opening of hostilities between Italy and Ethiopia shattered what little unity remained in the Stresa coalition. On October 11, 1935, the Assembly of the League of Nations declared Italy to be an "aggressor" nation and, despite the dissenting votes of Austria, Hungary, and Albania, ordered sanctions imposed against her.29 While

27 The Times (London), August 19, 1935, p. 10; Baer, The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War, pp. 262-266; Mccartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, p. 211.


29 The Times (London), October 11, 1935, p. 14; Villari,
these economic sanctions were not severe enough to force Mussolini to halt his invasion of Ethiopia, they did create a number of hardships for the Italian people which tended to intensify the public animosity towards Italy’s former Stresa partners. At the same time, although the British government repeatedly assured the Palazzo Chigi that no form of military action was being contemplated, widespread fears existed in Rome concerning the possibility of an armed clash between British and Italian forces.

Despite the severely strained relations between Rome, London, and Paris, in the fall of 1935 one final effort was made to settle the Ethiopian question and thereby salvage the Stresa coalition. At a meeting in Paris on December 7-9, 1935, Laval persuaded the British secretary of state for foreign affairs, Sir Samuel Hoare, to accept an agreement

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Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini, pp. 130-132; Macartney and Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937, pp. 314-316; Pelliuzzi, Italy, pp. 174-177.


which would have granted Mussolini nearly all the territorial concessions he had demanded in January, 1935. The plan provided that Italy receive a large portion of Tigre and Ogaden provinces in addition to what she had already conquered. An extensive area in southwestern Ethiopia also would be reserved as an Italian sphere of influence.\textsuperscript{32} In Rome, these proposals met with a very friendly reception. Although the Hoare-Laval plan was never officially communicated to the Italian government, officials in the foreign office viewed the offer as an "extraordinary success for Italy" which provided a promising starting point for further negotiations.\textsuperscript{33} Yet before the Hoare-Laval plan could be acted upon, the British press published the proposed concessions on December 14, 1935. British public opinion reacted violently against the Anglo-French agreement, forcing the resignation of Hoare and British abandonment of any further attempts to appease Italy. In France the press and the public were similarly aroused, forcing Laval to


leave office five weeks later.  

The failure of the Anglo-French proposals had a serious impact on Italian foreign policy. For Mussolini, it marked the end of the Stresa coalition. The Italian government subsequently attempted to maintain friendly ties with France, but relations with Great Britain rapidly deteriorated. The duce especially blamed the British for the imposition of sanctions against Italy and for the failure of the Hoare-Laval plan. Indeed, in Italian eyes the position taken by Great Britain in the Ethiopian question more closely resembled the response of an enemy than that of an ally. Under these circumstances, the Italian leader felt that a restoration of the Anglo-French-Italian partnership was impossible. Yet, though he had decided to abandon the Stresa alliance, Mussolini was uncertain as to what alternative course of action should be followed. As a


consequence, the Italian government sought to keep open as many of its European options as possible while it concentrated its efforts on achieving a successful conclusion to the Ethiopian War.

Italy's mounting difficulties with the League of Nations and her steadily deteriorating relations with Great Britain and France, however, soon forced her leaders to give special attention to one particular alternative course of action--rapprochement with Germany. The collapse of the Stresa alliance once again had left Italy in much the same position in which she had been immediately following the assassination of Dollfuß in July, 1934--alone and menaced by a number of potential enemies. In order to avoid the dangers implicit in such isolation, she was obliged to turn to the one European power that had demonstrated a moderately friendly attitude toward her activities in Ethiopia. And that power was Germany.

While differences continued to exist between Rome and Berlin, several factors contributed to Mussolini's decision to seek closer ties with Germany. The Reich's neutral attitude during the Ethiopian War, its refusal to sell arms to Italy's enemy, and its rejection of the sanctionist policies sponsored by the League of Nations greatly facilitated the reduction of tensions between the two countries.27

27 Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, January 7, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. IV, pp. 974-977; Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß, pp. 122-123.
Italian-German relations also were improved as a consequence of the assuagement of their rivalry over Austria. Although Mussolini had not modified his fundamental position in support of Austrian independence, his preoccupation with the war in Ethiopia and his need to improve relations with Germany forced him to accept a reduction of Italian influence in that country. Rome consequently was obliged to admit that Austria was in reality a German state and that she should follow a German-oriented foreign policy. As Mussolini explained to Von Hassell, Italy would have no objection to the expansion of German influence in Austria as long as that country's formal independence was recognized. The Italian leader, furthermore, suggested that the best solution to the Austrian question would be the conclusion of a treaty of friendship between the two German states and even offered his assistance in arranging such an agreement.

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The changing nature of Italian-German relations also
was evident in Vienna, where government leaders were in-
formed of the friendly ties between Rome and Berlin and of
Mussolini's interest in easing Austro-German differences.
During the talks between Egon Berger-Waldenegg, the Austrian
foreign minister, and Suvich in Florence on February 19,
1936, the Italian secretary of state for foreign affairs
made note of the general improvement in Italian-German re-
lations. Suvich took care to assure his Austrian guest that
the Italian government had not altered it stand in defense
of Austrian independence but suggested that it would view
with favor a reduction in Austro-German tensions. 41 Similar
suggestions also were made to Starhemberg during his visit
to Rome on March 4-8, 1936. Although the duce assured him
of Italy's continued support for Austria, the prevailing
mood among governing circles in Rome indicated to the Heim-
wehr leader the advisability of a closer alignment between
Austria and Germany. 42

Subsequent developments further intensified the pres-
sures in both Rome and Vienna for a rapprochement with

41 Bülow to the German envoy in Czechoslovakia, Berlin,
February 13, 1936, ibid., pp. 1131-1132; Von Hassell to the
German foreign office, Rome, February 28, 1936, National Ar-
chives (Washington, D. C.). Documents on German Foreign

42 Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini, pp. 210-
216; Von Papen to the German foreign office, Vienna, March
13, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol.
V, p. 125.
Germany. On March 7, 1936, German forces successfully re-occupied the Rhineland. Although Hitler's move took him by surprise, Mussolini raised no significant objections to the German violations of the Locarno Agreements. Indeed, Rome welcomed the German action since it diverted world attention from Italy's activities in Ethiopia. The British and French failure to oppose the reoccupation of the Rhineland forcefully also served to reinforce Mussolini's views concerning the weakness and unreliability of his former allies. A rehabilitation of the Stresa coalition obviously would be of little value to Italy, since these two governments lacked the will to halt German expansion even when their own vital interests were at stake. Rome, therefore, refused to cooperate with either London or Paris in any undertaking directed against Germany arising out of her violation of the Locarno Pact. Italy, as indicated


45 Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, March 8, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. V, pp. 50-52; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, March 9, 1936, ibid., pp. 65-66; Von Neurath memorandum, Berlin, March 14, 1936, ibid., 155-156; Von Hassell to the
by Mussolini's conversation with Von Hassell, would subsequently seek to follow a foreign policy in agreement with that of the Reich.\textsuperscript{46}

The German victory in the Rhineland also caused the Italian leader to exert greater pressure upon the Austrian government in support of his proposals for an Austro-German rapprochement. During the talks between the leaders of Italy, Austria, and Hungary in Rome on March 21, 1936, Mussolini sought to impress upon Schuschnigg the desirability of close ties between Berlin and Vienna. While he reaffirmed his earlier promises of political and economic assistance,\textsuperscript{47} the duce informed the Austrian chancellor that Italy would have fewer difficulties in assisting his country if Austro-German relations were less strained. Mussolini pointed out

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\textsuperscript{46}Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, March 8, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. V, pp. 50-52.

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that Italy was currently preoccupied with a war in Ethiopia and that she could not defend Austria alone. The Italian government therefore felt that an agreement with Germany offered Austria the best hope of insuring her independence while also helping to preserve peace in Central Europe.\textsuperscript{48}

As a first step in this direction, the duce suggested that Austria should suspend her contacts with members of the Little Entente. Schuschnigg was also informed that, because of his pronounced anti-Nazi sympathies, Starhemberg might have to be dropped from the government.\textsuperscript{49}

Mussolini's suggestions at the Rome Pact conference had an immediate impact on government leaders in Vienna and caused Schuschnigg to alter the course along which he had

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been guiding Austrian affairs since the fall of 1935. Prior to these talks, the Austrian chancellor had adhered to a strongly Italian-oriented policy in both internal and foreign affairs, in the belief that Italy would achieve a quick victory in Ethiopia and that she would continue to support Austria's resistance of Nazi aggression. Domestically, this policy had led to the strengthening of the Starhemberg wing of the Heimwehr in the Austrian government. Because of his involvement in various dealings with the Austrian Nazis, Fey was forced to resign as minister of interior on October 17, 1935. The resulting cabinet changes led to Starhemberg's assumption of Fey's former cabinet office in addition to his post as vice-chancellor and to the appointment of Ludwig Drexler, a close personal friend of the Heimwehr leader, as minister of finance. A decree issued the following day further strengthened Starhemberg's position by placing all paramilitary organizations under his command. These developments, as aptly described by Von Papen, had the cumulative effect of a "cold putsch by

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51 Neue Freie Presse, October 18, 1935 (Morgenblatt), p. 3; Von Papen to Hitler, Vienna, October 18, 1935, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. IV, pp. 751-753.
Starhemberg and the Heimwehr," which, because of the former's close ties with Rome, would insure that Austria would follow a pro-Italian course.\textsuperscript{52}

In the realm of foreign affairs, Schuschnigg likewise had sought to guide his country's actions in accordance with Italian wishes. During the League of Nations debates over Ethiopia, Austria refused to take part in the sanctions against Italy, despite economic pressure from France and Great Britain. After the failure of the Hoare-Laval proposals and the collapse of the Stresa coalition, Schuschnigg, with Italian approval, sought to improve his country's relations with the members of the Little Entente in an effort to promote greater economic cooperation among the states of Central Europe.\textsuperscript{53} As an initial step toward this goal, the Austrian chancellor held a series of talks with Milan Hodža, the Czechoslovakian minister-president, in Prague on January


\textsuperscript{53}Vollgruber to the Austrian foreign office, Rome, February 1, 1936, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXV, No. 35,006, Fos. 490-491; Vollgruber to the Austrian foreign office, Rome, January 9, 1936, ibid., No. 34,222, Fo. 424; German foreign office circular, Berlin, March 2, 1936, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 3,280, Frames E568,169-E568,171; Von Papen to the German foreign office, Vienna, February 24, 1936, ibid., Frame E568,166; Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini, pp. 206-207.

The results of the March, 1936, talks in Rome significantly altered these earlier political developments. Schuschnigg immediately moved to change those policies which Mussolini suggested might obstruct an Austro-German rapprochement. Following his return to Vienna, the Austrian chancellor quietly discontinued his negotiations with Czechoslovakia. Starhemberg's position in the government also was systematically undermined. In April, 1936, Schuschnigg struck a severe blow at the Heimwehr leader's control over the Fatherland Front by introducing a program of universal compulsory military service. Since the army was included within that organization, the resulting influx of new men would seriously weaken the Heimwehr's influence in the Front.\footnote{Von Papen to the German foreign office, Vienna, April 21, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. V, p. 457; Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluss, p. 126; Berger, "Ernst Rüdiger Fürst Starhemberg," pp. 155-156.} Starhemberg's involvement in the scandals that surrounded the bankruptcy of the Phönix Life Insurance Company in April, 1936, further weakened his position in the government.\footnote{Ball, Post-War German-Austrian Relations, pp. 254-256; Berger, "Ernst Rüdiger Fürst Starhemberg," pp. 155-156.} Ironically, however, the Heimwehr
leader's fall from power was precipitated by his unauthorized telegram to Mussolini of May 12, 1936, in which he congratulated the duce upon Italy's recent conquest of Ethiopia. Schuschnigg, infuriated by this usurpation of his authority, decided to make use of the incident to force Starhemberg to resign as vice-chancellor the following day.  

Also in accordance with Mussolini's suggestions at Rome, Schuschnigg initiated negotiations with German officials directed toward the conclusion of an Austro-German agreement. On May 1, 1936, the Austrian chancellor instructed Guido Schmidt, a close friend and the personal secretary of the Austrian president, to resume discussions with Von Papen concerning previous German proposals for a settlement. During his subsequent talks with the German ambassador, Schuschnigg expressed his desire for reconciliation with the Reich and suggested the possibility of admitting several members of the "national opposition" in his government. Von Papen, with Hitler's approval, accepted the Austrian invitation for negotiations concerning

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57 The Times (London), May 13, 1936, p. 15; Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini, pp. 228-230; Benoist-Michin, Griff Uber die Grenzen 1938, pp. 172-173; Gedye, Betrayal in Central Europe, pp. 176-177.

58 For a discussion of Von Papen's earlier proposals, see ante, p. 172. See also Von Papen, Mémoirs, p. 368.

Austro-German differences. Despite several initial obstacles, discussions during May and early June, 1936, between the German ambassador and Schmidt progressed rapidly. The scope of the talks was greatly expanded as time progressed, however. It was agreed that members of the "national opposition" were to be admitted not only to the government but also to the Fatherland Front, and plans were made for the granting of an amnesty to imprisoned National Socialists. Proposals likewise were suggested for the development of closer cooperation between Germany and Austria in cultural, political, and economic matters. 60

At the same time that he was negotiating with Berlin, the Austrian chancellor was careful to maintain his contacts with Rome. On June 5-6, 1936, Schuschnigg visited Mussolini at his estate near Rocca della Carmenate to give the Italian leader a general outline of the terms of the proposed Austro-German pact. The duce, after reaffirming his continued interest in Austria's independence, expressed his warm approval of the Austrian leader's plans for a rapprochement with the Reich. Such an agreement, from the Italian point of view, would not only insure Austria's independence but also provide the basis for a reduction of tensions in Central Europe. Mussolini, therefore, urged Schuschnigg to

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60 Schuschnigg to Von Papen, Vienna, June 20, 1936, ibid., pp. 667-668; Von Papen to Von Neurath, [Vienna], June 24, 1936, ibid., pp. 676-681; Von Papen, Mémos, p. 369.
bring his negotiations with Berlin to a successful conclusion. The Italian leader's words of encouragement had the desired effect; after his return from Italy the Austrian chancellor assumed personal control over the discussions with Von Papen, which culminated in the signing of an Austro-German "Gentlemen's Agreement" in Vienna on July 11, 1936.

The agreement concluded between Austria and Germany on July 11, 1936, had as its primary goal the elimination of all the key differences which had troubled relations between the two countries for the past two and a half years. The communique issued upon the signing of the agreement stressed the desire of both countries for a restoration of friendly relations between them. Each state promised to abstain from interfering in the internal affairs of the other. In addition, the German government formally recognized Austria's "full sovereignty." The Austrian government, in turn, declared that it would follow a foreign policy consistent with Austria's position as a "German state."

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61 Official note concerning Schuschnigg's visit to Italy, [Vienna], June 7, 1936, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton DCLV, No. 39,105, Pos. 13,708-13,710; Plessen to the German foreign office, Rome, June 10, 1936, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS, ser. T-120, Reel 776, Frames 370,328-370,329; Von Papen to the German foreign office, Vienna, July 11, 1936, ibid., Reel 1,008, Frames 402,765-402,766; Plessen to the German foreign office, Rome, June 6, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. V, pp. 601-602; Fuchs, Showdown in Vienna, pp. 28-31.

62 Text of the German-Austrian communique, [Vienna],
The "Gentlemen's Agreement," which remained confidential, outlined a general plan for future cooperation between the two countries in cultural, economic, and political areas. Press restrictions were to be reduced; greater freedom was to be permitted in the displaying of nationalist emblems and insignia; limitations on travel between the two countries were to be lifted; and a broad amnesty was to be granted to National Socialists imprisoned for political reasons. Provisions also were included for the settlement of any dispute that might arise in connection with the implementation of the accords.63

The Austro-German "Gentlemen's Agreement" had a significant impact on the foreign policies of all three countries that had a part in its inception. In both Austria and Germany government officials initially hailed the pact as marking the beginning of a new era in relations between the two states. As the friendly exchange of telegrams between Hitler and Schuschnigg on July 11, 1936, indicated, the leaders of both countries anticipated that the normalization of Austro-German relations would be mutually beneficial.64 For Austria, the agreement brought the promise

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of improved economic relations with Germany and a reduction in Nazi terrorism. Schuschnigg, having concluded a truce with the National Socialists, could reduce his dependence on the Heimwehr, which he subsequently dissolved on October 10, 1936. In Germany, the pact provided the government with a major diplomatic victory which served to offset any lingering memories of its involvement in the fiasco of July 25, 1934. At the same time, though it did not fulfill all of Hitler's expectations, the "Gentlemen's Agreement" marked an important new step in the gradual Nazi penetration of Austria.

Like most compromise solutions, however, the Austro-German understanding raised nearly as many problems as it purported to solve and was open to as many interpretations as there were parties to the agreement. Thus, whereas Schuschnigg saw the accord as embodying the maximum concessions that he was prepared to make to the Nazis, Hitler viewed it as the first step in a process that would eventually lead to a union of the two German states.


Neue Freie Presse, October 10, 1936 (Abendblatt), p. 1; Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß, pp. 143-144.

See the "Von Papen memorandum," in Der Hochverratsprozess gegen Dr. Guido Schmidt, p. 368. See also Eichstädt, Von Dollfuß zu Hitler, pp. 115-116; Bullock, Austria, 1918-1938, pp. 291-292; and Brook-Shepherd, The Anschluß, pp. xx1-xxii.

Von Papen, Memoirs, pp. 376-377; Gehl, Austria, Ger-
Ultimately, the German view triumphed. After the conclusion of the "Gentlemen's Agreement," Austrian policy no longer was based on opposition to the Nazis but rather on cooperation with them. Austria's recognition of her status as a German state and her pledge to follow a foreign policy consistent with that position seriously restricted her freedom of action. At the same time, it soon became apparent that the agreement did not provide Austria with any compensating advantages since it failed to check German interference in her domestic affairs.

For Italy, the "Gentlemen's Agreement" also had considerable importance. Mussolini, when informed of its general terms, expressed his complete approval. Indeed, because of the significant role played by the duce in its inception, the Italian press and public hailed the Austro-German agreement as a major victory for Italian diplomacy. Since it involved German recognition of Austria's independence, the pact also served to reduce Italian fears of an Anschluß between the two German states. Most important,

many, and the Anschluß, pp. 144-145; Hibbert, Benito Mussolini, pp. 78-79.

however, the agreement removed "the last and only mortgage on German-Italian relations." By her acceptance of the "Gentlemen's Agreement" and her recognition of Austria as a German state, Italy in effect had relinquished her "protectorate" over that country.

The Austro-German "Gentlemen's Agreement" thus marked a major turning point in Italian foreign policy. Mussolini's support of the pact not only signified the end of Italy's unqualified support of Austria but also was an important step in the further expansion of German-Italian relations. Yet this shift in Italian policy did not entail an outright surrender to Germany. Mussolini admittedly had abandoned the instrument of Italian policy in Austria—the Heimwehr—and consented to the participation of the National Socialists in the Austrian government, thereby countenancing the expansion of German influence in that country. In exchange, however, he had secured Hitler's recognition of Austria's independence and his assurance that the Anschluss question would be postponed. The duce, furthermore, assumed that Germany would not take any action which might disturb this balance without first consulting Italy. As a result of

69Rotter to the Austrian chancellery, Rome, July 14, 1936. Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXVI, No. 40,393, Pos. 31-32; Department II memorandum, Berlin, July 14, 1936, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 1,008, Frame 402,992; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, July 17, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. V, pp. 774-779.
the "Gentlemen's Agreement," therefore, Italian-German differences over Austria were greatly diminished. The possibility now existed for closer cooperation between the two dictators.

A situation that was favorable to expanded German-Italian collaboration did not take long to develop. On July 18, 1936, a group of Spanish army officers, led by General Francisco Franco, initiated an uprising in Morocco against the liberal republican government in Madrid. The revolt quickly spread to Spain, where it grew into a bitter struggle between rightist-oriented groups seeking to establish a conservative, military regime and supporters of the existing government. The situation was further complicated by the intervention of several outside governments--Italy and Germany in support of Franco and the Soviet Union in support of the republican forces--which turned the conflict into an ideological contest between fascism and bolshevism. For nearly three years, Spain suffered the ravages of war, until finally, with the capture of Madrid by Franco's armies on March 22, 1939, the struggle was brought to a close.

Italian and German cooperation in support of Franco during the Spanish Civil War predictably had a significant impact on relations between the two countries. Previous joint action between Rome and Berlin largely had been confined to diplomatic concerns, as seen in Germany's attitude of benevolent neutrality towards Italy during the Ethiopian War and in Mussolini's favorable response to Hitler's
reoccupation of the Rhineland. Italian pressure in Vienna also had played an important part in forging the Austro-German "Gentlemen's Agreement." The Spanish Civil War carried German-Italian solidarity one step further, resulting in closer collaboration in ideological and military matters. The common front established by Italy and Germany in their struggle against the "Bolshevik menace" in Spain gradually emerged as one of the most important bonds between the two countries. The Spanish Civil War further provided ample opportunities for the development of friendly ties between Italian and German military leaders, which with a little cultivation, Berlin hoped, might eventually lead to an Italian-German alliance.70

For Germany--and likewise for Austria--the Spanish Civil War also was of importance because it diverted world attention from Nazi activities in Central Europe. Indeed, German military planners, rather than attempting to secure a rapid victory for Franco, sought to prolong the struggle in Spain for as long as possible so as to enable Hitler to expand his influence in Central Europe.71 In general, this strategy worked quite admirably. The British and French governments quickly lost all interest in Austria and focused their attention on Spain, where their opposition to Franco


led to renewed diplomatic clashes with Italy. Mussolini faced a similar situation. Italy’s actions in Spain led to her further alienation from Great Britain and France and to her increased reliance upon Germany. The duce, consequently, had neither the time nor the ability to become actively involved in the affairs of Central Europe.

The impact of the Spanish Civil War on Italian foreign policy and the resultant improved relations between Italy and Germany became clearly evident during the informal discussions between Mussolini and Hans Frank, the Reich minister of justice, in Rome on September 23, 1936. The situation in Spain naturally dominated the talks. Both men lauded the successful cooperation of German and Italian forces in Spain and pledged to continue their support of Franco in his struggle against bolshevism. In discussing the reasons behind Germany’s involvement in the Spanish Civil War, Frank assured the duce that the Reich was acting solely out of ideological considerations and “out of loyalty to Mussolini.”72 Germany, he asserted, had no interest in the Mediterranean, a region which she had already recognized as an Italian sphere of influence.73 As a further sign of the Reich’s friendship for Italy, Frank reaffirmed Hitler’s offer to recognize the Italian conquest of Ethiopia at the


earliest convenient moment.

The discussions between Frank and Mussolini also turned to a topic of somewhat greater import to Berlin than either Ethiopia or the civil war in Spain—that of Austria. In an effort to dispel any Italian misgivings concerning German aims in that country, Frank assured his host that with the conclusion of the "Gentlemen's Agreement," Hitler considered the Austrian question closed. The German leader further indicated that as long as the Schuschnigg government fulfilled its obligations as outlined in the pact it would have nothing to fear from the Reich.74 Mussolini, in reply, expressed his warm approval of the Austro-German accords. The resulting reduction in tensions in Central Europe, he maintained, was important not only to Germany and Austria but also to Italy.75

The friendly atmosphere prevailing throughout the Frank-Mussolini discussions indicated the extent to which German-Italian relations had changed since the collapse of the Stresa coalition. Following her break with Great Britain and France as a result of the Ethiopian War Italy had gradually drifted toward a policy of close association with Germany. As has been noted, Hitler's neutral attitude toward Italy during the Ethiopian War provided the foundation

74 Ibid.

75 Unsigned notes [Frank], [Rome], September 23, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. V, pp. 1000-1003; Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, p. 45.
for an Italian-German rapprochement, and the conclusion of
the "Gentlemen's Agreement," by reducing their differences
over Austria, eliminated the only serious obstacle to close
cooperation between the two countries. The Spanish Civil
War advanced the friendly ties developing between Rome and
Berlin by providing opportunities for contacts between Ger-
man and Italian military leaders and by encouraging the de-
velopment of a common ideological front against bolshevism.
Little remained to complete this reversal in relations be-
tween the two countries except to underwrite the emerging
trend toward Italian-German solidarity through a formal
exchange of views between German and Italian leaders.

On October 21, 1936, Count Galeazzo Ciano, Italy's
foreign minister and the son-in-law of the duce, traveled
to Berlin for talks with the leading officials of the Ger-
man Reich. In his discussions with Von Neurath, Ciano ex-
amined every major aspect of Italian-German relations.
Once again the situation in Spain dominated the discussions.
Both men pledged their respective governments to continue
to support Franco and to work together to check the threat
of Communist expansion in Europe.76 With regard to the

76Berger-Waldenegg, Austrian envoy in Rome, to Schmidt,
Rome, October 27, 1936, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Poli-
tische Archiv, Karton LXXXVI, No. 43, 567, Fos. 156-157;
Ciano's statements to the German press, [Berlin, October 24,
1936], National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on
German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 264, Frame
201, 861; Von Neurath memorandum, Berlin, October 21, 1936,
1125-1129; Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, p. 53.
general European situation, Ciano and Von Neurath agreed to coordinate their policies in dealing with the League of Nations and in Central Europe. In discussing the Austrian situation, Ciano warmly praised the July, 1936, "Gentlemen's Agreement," and further expressed the hope that Italian-German economic cooperation in that country could be expanded. Finally, both men also examined the East African situation. Von Neurath once again renewed Germany's promise to recognize Ethiopia as part of the Italian empire. In reply, Ciano pledged that Italy would protect German interests in her newly acquired colony and that she would support the German government's demands for a restoration of its lost colonies and for freer access to sources of raw materials. These general points of agreement subsequently were embodied in a secret protocol signed by the two foreign ministers in Berlin on October 23, 1936.

77 Ciano's statements to the German press, [Berlin, October 24, 1936], National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 264, Frames 201,860-201,861; Von Neurath memorandum, Berlin, October 21, 1936, ibid., Frame 201,834; Von Neurath memorandum, Berlin, October 21, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. V, pp. 1125-1129; Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, pp. 52-54.

78 Berger-Waldenegg to Schmidt, Rome, October 27, 1936, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXVI, No. 43,567, Fos. 156-157; Ciano's statements to the German press, [Berlin, October 24, 1936], National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 264, Frame 201,862; Von Neurath memorandum, Berlin, October 21, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. C, Vol. V, pp. 1125-1129.

79 German-Italian Protocol, Berlin, October 23, 1936,
The high point of Ciano's visit to Germany, however, came the next day, when he traveled to Berchtesgaden for an interview with Hitler. The German chancellor quickly captivated his Italian guest by his warm praise of Mussolini as "the leading statesman of the world" and by his complimentary remarks concerning the "maturity" of Italian Fascism. 80 Hitler also lauded German-Italian cooperation in the struggle against bolshevism in Spain and held out the promise of a German-Italian alliance which would be directed against both the Russian menace and the possibility of encirclement by Great Britain and France. 81 Although no direct references were made to Austria, the German chancellor, nonetheless, took care to indicate where his desires lay in that matter. Prior to Ciano's departure, Hitler had two telescopes set up pointing towards Salzburg as a clear indication that the Austrian question had not been forgotten. His Italian guest made no reply to this obvious gesture. 82

Ciano's visit to Berlin had significant implications for both Italy and Germany. The agreements signed at the conclusion of the talks underscored the growing political and ideological solidarity between the two countries. For


81 Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, pp. 56-59.

82 Kirkpatrick, Mussolini, A Study in Power, p. 346.
Berlin, the conference also resulted in Italy's tacit recognition of Germany's dominant position vis-à-vis Austria. Hitler was further assured that there would be no resurrection of the Stresa coalition. The meeting, however, had even more important implications for Mussolini: Italy's isolation--a consequence of her actions in Ethiopia--was finally brought to an end. The Ciano-Neurath accords assured Rome of the friendship as well as the political and diplomatic support of the powerful German Reich. Admittedly, this alliance was not achieved without certain expense involving a serious reduction of Italian influence in Austria, but Rome had been promised that no changes would be made in Central Europe without her approval. As a result of Ciano's talks in Berlin, therefore, relations between the two countries reached a new peak of friendship and cooperation. This Italian-German rapprochement was subsequently proclaimed to the world by Mussolini in Milan on November 1, 1936, when he announced the creation of "an axis around which all the other nations of Europe could group themselves." The era of Italian-French-British cooperation in Central Europe--indeed, of an independent Italian foreign policy in that region--thus was brought to a close. Mussolini had committed himself to the establish-

83 Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, November 2, 1936, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser., T-120, Reel 775, Frames 368,522-368,527. See also The Times (London), November 2, 1936, p. 14; Wiskemann, The Rome-Berlin Axis, p. 68.
ment of closer ties between Italy and Germany and thereby accepted Nazi hegemony over Austria.
CHAPTER VIII
THE WATCH IS ABANDONED

The inception of the Rome-Berlin Axis heralded a significant transformation in Italian-German relations. Although Mussolini's address to the Italian people on November 1, 1936, contained little that was not already known in most diplomatic circles, his remarks publicly indicated for the first time the extent to which ties between the two countries had been strengthened since the collapse of the Stresa coalition. Germany, once branded as an enemy, was lauded as an ally in the common struggle against bolshevism.\(^1\) At the same time, the duce's speech also foreshadowed the subsequent course of development in relations between Rome and Berlin that eventually culminated in their wartime partnership. With the proclamation of the Axis, Mussolini, in effect, committed himself to the further expansion of German-Italian friendship. Rome would no longer seek to obstruct German foreign policy. Instead, the Palazzo Chigi undertook to broaden the areas of mutual understanding between the two countries and to reach an accommodation with Berlin on matters where differences continued to persist.

\(^1\) Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, November 2, 1936, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 775, Frame 368,525; The Times (London), November 2, 1936, p. 14.
This shift in Italian-German relations, signalized by the emergence of the Rome-Berlin Axis, had significant implications for Italian policy in Central Europe. Mussolini's remarks on November 1 served to amplify the results of Ciano's meetings with German leaders in late October, 1936.2 Taken together, the Italian foreign minister's discussions in Berlin and the duce's speech in Milan indicate a weakening of Italy's position in Central Europe. While Mussolini had secured Hitler's assurance that no changes would be made in Austria without his knowledge, he also had recognized Germany's preeminent position in that country. Italy, admittedly, continued to work for a compromise on the Austrian question that would avoid a merger of the two German states. Her leaders, however, no longer seriously sought to block the expansion of German influence in that country.

The importance of this shift in relations between Rome and Berlin, dramatized by Mussolini's speech in Milan, was clearly recognized in Vienna. Indeed, Austrian leaders had been concerned about the growth of Italian-German friendship and the resultant effect on Austro-Italian ties since early September, 1936, following the visit of Hans Frank to Rome.3 The outcome of the Italian foreign minister's talks in Berlin and the duce's "Axis speech" only served

2 Ante, pp. 210-214.
3 Ante, pp. 208-209.
to heighten Austrian fears. Despite assurances by Musso-
lini and Ciano that there had been no basic change in Aus-
tro-Italian relations, officials in Vienna increasingly
believed that continued Italian support for Austrian inde-
pendence would be contingent upon her implementation of the
July, 1936, "Gentlemen's Agreement" and her adherence to a
German-oriented foreign policy. As a consequence of this
shift in Italian-German relations and the apparent decline
of Italy's influence in Central Europe, the Austrian govern-
ment felt obliged to pursue with greater earnestness its
efforts to clarify its ties with the Reich.

Austrian endeavors to achieve a new "modus vivendi"
with Germany were also necessitated by the differences that
developed between the two countries during the fall of 1936.
Despite the conclusion of the July Agreement, relations be-
tween Vienna and Berlin remained tense. The Schuschnigg
government, it should be noted, had fulfilled most of the

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4 Evidence of this may be found in Berger-Waldenegg to Schmidt, Rome, October 24, 1936, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXVI, No. 43,465, Pos. 152-154; Berger-Waldenegg to Schmidt, Rome, April 28, 1937, ibid., No. 38,835, Fo. 473; and Berger-Waldenegg to Schmidt, Rome, July 19, 1937, Der Hochverratsprozess gegen Dr. Guido Schmidt, p. 515.

5 These assurances were given to Austrian leaders during the November, 1936, Rome Pact conferences held in Vienna. See Berger-Waldenegg to Schmidt, Rome, November 6, 1936, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXVI, No. 43,832, Pos. 182-184; protocol of the November 12, 1936, Rome Pact conference. Vienna, November 12, 1936, Adam, Allianz Hitler-Horthy-Mussolini, pp. 132-133; Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, pp. 63-64.
pledges which it had made as part of the "Gentlemen's Agreement." More than 17,000 persons had been amnestied, and legal proceedings against an additional 12,618 had been dropped.\(^6\) Press restrictions had been eased, and greater freedom had been granted for the display of nationalist emblems and insignia. Schuschnigg also had opened the government to members of the opposition by admitting two Nazi sympathizers--Odo Neustädter-Stürmer and Edmund Glaise-Horstenau--to his cabinet as minister of public security and minister of interior, respectively.\(^7\) These changes failed to satisfy the German government, however, and Berlin continually sought to gain additional concessions from Vienna.\(^8\) The transformation in German-Italian relations, evidenced by Mussolini's "Axis speech," further intensified the pressure on Schuschnigg. Consequently, when the Wilhelmsstraße suggested that talks be held in order to examine


\(^7\) These cabinet appointments were made on November 3, 1936. See Neue Freie Presse, November 4, 1936 (Morgenblatt), p. 1; Von Papen to Hitler, Vienna, November 4, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. D, Vol. I, pp. 314-316; Von Papen, Memoirs, p. 379.

\(^8\) Memorandum concerning the meeting between Göring and Schuschnigg, Budapest, October 13, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. D, Vol. I, pp. 306-309; German foreign office to Von Papen, Berlin, November 6, 1936, ibid., p. 319; record of the de Kánya-Göring conversation, Budapest, October 11, 1936, Adam, Allianz Hitler-Horthy-Mussolini, p. 130.
the difficulties that had arisen between the two countries since the conclusion of the July Agreement, the Austrian government accepted the German invitation. On November 19, 1936, Schmidt traveled to Berlin to meet with his German counterpart.9

The discussions held between German and Austrian officials in Berlin on November 19-21, 1936, covered a wide range of issues that troubled relations between the two countries. The major points agreed to during the talks subsequently were embodied in a protocol signed just before Schmidt's return to Vienna.10 Both countries undertook to ease their press regulations and to reduce their trade restrictions. Schmidt renewed his government’s promise to follow a German-oriented foreign policy and further pledged that Austria would assume a more active role in the struggle against bolshevism. The most significant aspect of the agreement, however, was found in the provision which barred either country from entering into any "new, more extensive

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9 Background information about the conference may be found in German foreign office memorandum, Berlin, September 2, 1936, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 1,724, Frames E017,748-E017,749; German foreign office to Von Papen, Berlin, November 6, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. D, Vol. I, p. 319; German Foreign office memorandum, Berlin, November 9, 1936, ibid., pp. 320-321; Von Papen, Memoirs, pp. 379-380; and Eichstädt, Von Dollfuß zu Hitler, pp. 140-145.

economic coalitions in the Danube region...without previous consultation."\(^{11}\) In accepting this German demand, the Schuschnigg government seriously limited its freedom of action in Central Europe and virtually precluded the possibility of any new pact with the Little Entente. From the Austrian point of view, however, this concession apparently was acceptable provided that it secured Germany's recognition of Austrian independence.\(^{12}\)

Contrary to expectations in both countries,\(^{13}\) however, the Schmidt-Von Neurath accord failed to reduce substantially the difficulties that plagued Austro-German relations. The general easing of tensions between the two countries that followed the Berlin conference was abruptly reversed as a result of Schuschnigg's address to a group of Fatherland Front leaders in Klagenfurt on November 26, 1936.\(^{14}\)

\(^{11}\)Ibid., p. 343.

\(^{12}\)Indeed, Schmidt, Schuschnigg, and most Austrian officials were very pleased with the results of this conference. They believed that it had solved most Austro-German problems. See Von Papen to Hitler, Vienna, November 24, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. D, Vol. I, pp. 348-349; Schmidt's testimony of February 28, 1947, Der Hochverratsprozess gegen Dr. Guido Schmidt, pp. 35-36; and Eichstädt, Von Dollfuß zu Hitler, pp. 146-147.

\(^{13}\)German officials likewise initially viewed the results of these talks quite favorably. See German foreign office to German diplomatic missions abroad, Berlin, November 21, 1936, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. D, Vol. I, p. 346; Schmidt's testimony of February 28, 1947, Der Hochverratsprozess gegen Dr. Guido Schmidt, pp. 35-36; and Eichstädt, Von Dollfuß zu Hitler, pp. 146-147.

\(^{14}\)Neue Freie Presse, November 27, 1936 (Morgenblatt), pp. 4-5.
The Austrian chancellor's description of National Socialism as one of the most serious problems that confronted Austria infuriated Hitler and elicited a sharp protest from the Wilhelmstraße. Schuschnigg's subsequent weak efforts to minimize the speech as an attempt to pacify the more radical elements of the Fatherland Front did little to reduce Berlin's irritation. German officials generally interpreted the Austrian leader's remarks as a challenge to the National Socialist movement in that country and as a serious threat to Hitler's plans for expansion in Central Europe. Pressure clearly would have to be exerted in Vienna in order to restrain Schuschnigg and to insure that Austria fulfilled her obligations under the July Agreement and the recently concluded November pact. Nazi activities in that country subsequently were increased. At the same time,


17 A general discussion of the deterioration of Austro-German relations in early 1937 can be found in Eichstädt, Von Dollfuß zu Hitler, pp. 147-177. Additional information on the pressure that was brought to bear on Austria by the Nazis and the German government may be found in Tauschitz to Schmidt, Berlin, November 4, 1936, Der Hochverratsprozess gegen Dr. Guido Schmidt, pp. 489-491; Von
Berlin made inquiries in Rome in an effort to ascertain the duce's attitude on the Austrian question and to obtain Italian support for its démarche in Vienna.

Göring's visit to Rome in January, 1937, provided Hitler with an excellent opportunity to gauge Mussolini's probable response to any change in the Austro-German "status quo." During his discussions with the Italian leader, the German air minister reaffirmed his government's friendship for Italy and praised the expanded cooperation between the two countries in European affairs. Only one problem, the Nazi leader indicated, remained unsettled, and that involved Germany's relations with Austria. Göring repeated Hitler's earlier assurances that a solution to the Austrian question was not pressing but expressed Berlin's dissatisfaction with the manner in which Schuschnigg had been fulfilling the promises that he had made in July and November, 1936. He also condemned the Austrian chancellor's speech at Klagenfurt as contrary to the spirit of the "Gentlemen's


Agreement" and maintained that the Austrian government was dominated by clerical groups opposed to National Socialism. Insisting that this unfriendly attitude toward the Reich could not be allowed to persist, Göring expressed the hope that the duce would use his influence in Vienna to insure Schuschnigg's compliance with German wishes.19

Mussolini's reply to his German guest's remarks revealed much of the weakness and uncertainty which had begun to characterize Italy's position in Central Europe. Although the duce reaffirmed the importance of Austrian independence and insisted that he was unable to intervene directly in that country's internal affairs on Germany's behalf, his efforts to defend the Schuschnigg government in response to Göring's onsloughs lacked their earlier vigor.20 The events of the last several months clearly had had a definite impact upon Italian foreign policy. Rome still desired to maintain Austria's independence, but she was unable to undertake an active role in Central European


affairs. Mussolini's efforts to consolidate his hold over Ethiopia and his commitments in Spain had already consumed many of his country's limited resources. Italy's uneasy relations with Great Britain only further complicated her international position and distracted her from National Socialist activities in Austria.\(^{21}\) Aside from these considerations, the duce's support of Schuschnigg also had been greatly undermined by reports which indicated the existence of considerable anti-Italian sentiment in Austrian government circles.\(^{22}\) Thus when Göring made several remarks concerning an eventual union of Austria and Germany, the duce only shook his head.\(^{23}\) Berlin, it was agreed, would not move against Austria without consulting Rome. At the same time, however, Italy would not repeat her gesture of

\(^{21}\) Attempts had been made in Rome and London in January, 1937, to reach an understanding concerning a reduction of military forces in the Mediterranean. While limited success was achieved in these negotiations, the improvement in Anglo-Italian relations was not lasting. See Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, pp. 75-80; British-Italian communique on the Mediterranean included in a memorandum of the German embassy in London to the German foreign office, London, January 3, 1937, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 2,737, Frames E426,918-E426,919; and Berger-Waldeneg to Schmidt, Rome, March 9, 1937, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXVI, No. 36,851, Fos. 398-401.

\(^{22}\) Ciano acquired this impression during his trip to Vienna in November, 1936. See Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, p. 67. See also Berger-Waldenegg to Schmidt, Rome, January 25, 1937, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXVI, No. 35,021, Fos. 323-326.

\(^{23}\) Von Papen, Memoirs, p. 387; Brook-Shepherd, The Anschluß, p. 2; Hibbert, Benito Mussolini, p. 83.
July, 1934.  

The decline of Italian influence in Central Europe was further demonstrated during the talks held between Schuschnigg and Mussolini in Venice on April 22-23, 1937. The Austrian chancellor, under pressure at home from the Nazis, had come to Venice hoping to rekindle Italian interest in his country's defense. Such support was not forthcoming, however. Although Mussolini reaffirmed his concern over Austria's continued independence, the nature of these assurances betokened a noticeable shift in Italian policy. The Italian government no longer pledged itself to defend Austria militarily but instead promised to protect her politically through the Rome-Berlin Axis. In explaining the reasons for this change in policy, the duce stressed the many difficulties that Italy faced in Africa, Spain, and the Mediterranean and emphasized the importance of her close ties with the Reich in overcoming these problems. Because of her troubles abroad and her need for German assistance, Italy could no longer follow her previous independent course in Central Europe. Mussolini, therefore, informed Schuschnigg that the best way of insuring Austria's independence would be for her to follow a policy that was

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in accord with the Rome-Berlin Axis. To achieve this, he insisted, the Austrian chancellor must fulfill the promises he had made to Germany in July and November, 1936, and allow members of the National Socialist Party a greater voice in his government. Austria's foreign policy also would have to be brought into closer alignment with that of the Reich, and further attempts to establish friendly ties with either the Western Powers or the Little Entente would have to be discontinued.

The shift in Italian foreign policy evidenced by Mussolini's talks with Schuschnigg also was illustrated by an interesting incident that occurred during the Austrian chancellor's stay in Venice. At the same moment that Schuschnigg was laying a wreath on a tomb dedicated to the Austro-Hungarian sailors who had died in the First World War Mussolini was visiting the Milwaukee, a German "strength through joy" ship visiting the city. During his tour of the German vessel the duce reportedly expressed his elation

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at having finally trodden on German soil.\textsuperscript{27} An unusual breach of diplomatic etiquette, the incident, accompanied by the suppressed tone of Mussolini's assurances to Schuschnigg, demonstrated the weakness of Italy's position in Central Europe and her growing dependence on Germany. These changes in Italian policy did not go unnoticed by the duce's Austrian guests. Indeed, while her leaders considered it unwise to alter Austria's ties with Italy, they were forced to recognize that Rome could no longer be relied upon to defend Austrian independence.\textsuperscript{28}

Events during the late spring and early summer of 1937 continued to reflect the decline of Italy's position in Central Europe and her increasingly pro-German orientation. On May 3, 1937, Von Neurath arrived in Rome for a series of talks with Mussolini and Ciano. During these exchanges, German and Italian leaders examined a number of matters of mutual interest. Von Neurath and Mussolini reaffirmed their support of Franco and pledged to continue the struggle against bolshevism.\textsuperscript{29} Both men, furthermore, agreed to

\textsuperscript{27}German consul in Trieste to the German embassy in Rome, Trieste, April 26, 1937, National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 776, Frames 370, 475-370, 479; Schmidt's testimony of February 28, 1947, Der Hochverratsprozess gegen Dr. Guido Schmidt, p. 44; Wiskemann, The Rome-Berlin Axis, p. 75.

\textsuperscript{28}Schmidt's testimony of February 28, 1947, Der Hochverratsprozess gegen Dr. Guido Schmidt, pp. 43-44.

\textsuperscript{29}German foreign office memorandum, [Berlin, May, 1937], National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on
coordinate their policies in dealing with Great Britain, France, and the League of Nations.\footnote{German foreign office memorandum, [Berlin, May, 1937], National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 776, Frames 370,460-370,462; Von Neurath memorandum, Rome, May 3, 1937, ibid., Reel 775, Frame 368,588.} Toward the end of these talks the German foreign minister also brought up the Austrian question. Von Neurath expressed his government's irritation with Schuschnigg's failure to fulfill the terms of the July and November, 1936, agreements.\footnote{Von Neurath memorandum, Rome, May 3, 1937, ibid., Reel 775, Frames 368,585-368,586; German foreign office memorandum, Berlin, May 8, 1937, ibid., Frames 368,590-368,592; German foreign office to German legations in Austria and Czechoslovakia, Berlin, May 8, 1937, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. D, Vol. I, p. 419.} Mussolini, without even seeking to defend the Austrian chancellor's position, informed his German guest that he had already indicated to Schuschnigg the need for closer ties between Berlin and Vienna. The duce went on to express the view that Austria was a German state and must adhere to a policy in accord with the Rome-Berlin Axis.\footnote{Ibid.; Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, p. 116.} The two men subsequently concluded their discussion of Austrian affairs by promising to work together to further coordinate their countries' policies in Central Europe.\footnote{German foreign office memorandum, [Berlin, May, 1937], National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 776, Frame 370,460-370,462; Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, p. 115.}
The Mussolini-Von Neurath discussions in Rome were soon followed by yet another public indication of the close ties developing between Italy and Germany. In his address to the Italian Chamber of Deputies on May 13, 1937, Ciano warmly praised Italy's friendly relations with Germany and the close cooperation between the two countries in European affairs. No problem, not even the Austrian question, he insisted, could disturb German-Italian friendship. The Italian foreign minister's remarks once again reaffirmed Italy's acceptance of Germany's preeminent position in Austrian affairs. Indeed, during his subsequent talks with de Kánya in Budapest at the end of May, Ciano further expanded upon these statements when he informed the Hungarian leader that, although Italy continued to support Austria's independence, she expected an eventual union of the two German states.

The numerous indications of Italian-German cooperation evidenced during the first half of the year, however, only served as a prelude to the events that surrounded Mussolini's trip to Germany on September 24-28, 1937. The

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preparations for the duce's visit had been elaborately planned, and no expense was spared to impress upon him Germany's unity and might. Upon his arrival in Munich, Mussolini was welcomed by Hitler and feted at the Brown House, the headquarters of the German National Socialist Party. During the next two days the Italian leader was treated to an impressive display of German military and industrial strength as he was taken to see the German army maneuvers at Mecklenberg and the Krupp industrial complex at Essen. The visit was climaxed by the triumphal entry of the two dictators in Berlin on September 27 and by the duce's address to the German people, delivered at the Maifeld on September 28, 1937.36 Deeply impressed by the apparent strength of the German Reich, Mussolini used the occasion of his speech to emphasize the solidarity between Italy and Germany and their common desire for peace.37

The reaffirmation and expansion of German-Italian friendship also emerged as the dominant theme of the talks

p. 143.


37 Text of Mussolini's speech in Berlin, [September 28, 1937], National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 260, Frames 194,419-194,424; Von Hassell to the German foreign office, Rome, October 8, 1937, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. D, Vol. I, p. 10; The Times (London), September 29, 1937, p. 12; Willis, Mussolini in Deutschland, pp. 23-27; Hibbert, Benito Mussolini, p. 84.
held between German and Italian leaders during the duce's stay in the Reich. Although the two dictators concluded no formal agreements, their many informal discussions, ranging over a large number of issues, served to solidify the ties between their two countries. Both men reaffirmed their support of Franco and pledged to continue the struggle against bolshevism. They also examined in detail their difficulties with the two Western Powers and the League of Nations.\footnote{Berger-Waldenegg to Schmidt, Rome, September 26, 1937, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXVI, No. 44,005, Fos. 644-645; German foreign office to all German diplomatic missions, Berlin, September 30, 1937, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. D, Vol. 1, pp. 1-2; German foreign office memorandum, Berlin, October 2, 1937, ibid., pp. 2-6; Willis, Mussolini in Deutschland, pp. 19-21.}

Affairs in Central Europe likewise received considerable attention during the Hitler-Mussolini conversations. The German leader generally took the initiative in these discussions, attacking the Austrian government for its failure to fulfill its obligations under the "Gentlemen's Agreement." Hitler once again assured the duce that he had no intention of intervening in Austrian affairs, but he insisted that the Schuschnigg government must align its domestic and foreign policies more closely with those of the Reich.\footnote{German foreign office memorandum, [Berlin], n. d., National Archives (Washington, D. C.), Documents on German Foreign Policy MSS., ser. T-120, Reel 3,197, Frame E529,819.} Mussolini raised no objections to these
demands.\textsuperscript{40} Indeed, during his subsequent conversations
with Göring, the Italian leader clearly indicated that he
was willing to recognize Germany's special interests in
Austria. When the German air minister showed him a map on
which the Austro-German frontier had been conspicuously
removed, Mussolini's only remark was that Czechoslovakia
might be disagreeably in the way.\textsuperscript{41} Indeed, because of his
involvement in Spain and his increasing reliance on German
support, the duce was able to do little else. The apparent
pomp with which the Italian dictator had been received in
Berlin did not alter the fact that the relationship of 1934
clearly had been reversed. Germany, not Italy, now deter-
mined which course events would follow in Austria.

Less than two months later the "spiritual bonds" forged
during Mussolini's tour of Germany were formally underwrit-
ten by Italy's signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact on Novem-
ber 6, 1937.\textsuperscript{42} Rome's adherence to the year-old German-
Japanese agreement reaffirmed her opposition to bolshevism
and heralded what was intended to be "the first basic

\begin{footnotes}
\item[40] Von Neurath memorandum, Berlin, October 1, 1937,
463-464; German foreign office to all German diplomatic

\item[41] Göring's testimony at Nuremberg on July 6, 1946, as
cited in Der Hochverratsprozess gegen Dr. Guido Schmidt,
p. 300; Wiskemann, \textit{The Rome-Berlin Axis}, pp. 81-82.

\item[42] Protocol, supplementing the Anti-Comintern Pact of
November 25, 1936, Rome, November 6, 1937, Documents on
German Foreign Policy, ser. D, Vol. I, pp. 26-27; Ciano,
Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, p. 142; Ciano, Tagebücher
\end{footnotes}
gesture which would lead to a much closer understanding of
a political and military nature between the three states."\textsuperscript{43}
Aside from strengthening German-Italian political and mili-
tary ties, however, the pact also had definite implications
for Austria. The agreement implicitly defined certain
spheres of influence for each of the three powers. In
accordance with this unwritten understanding, Berlin ac-
nowledged Italy's preeminent position in the Mediterranean
and Rome accepted German hegemony in Central Europe.\textsuperscript{44}
Both governments thus recognized Austria as part of Ger-
many's sphere of influence, and while Berlin agreed not to
take any action in that country without first consulting
Italy, Rome indicated that it would raise no objections to
a union of the two German states if the Austrians could be
won over to the idea.\textsuperscript{45}

The marked expansion of Italian-German political and

\textsuperscript{43}Ciano, \textit{Ciano's Diplomatic Papers}, p. 142.

\textsuperscript{44}Wiskemann, \textit{The Rome-Berlin Axis}, pp. 70 and 86;
Ciano, \textit{Ciano's Diplomatic Papers}, p. 146. Further evidence
that such an arrangement was implicitly recognized by both
governments can be found in Joachim von Ribbentrop's state-
ments to the press on November 25, 1936, after the German-
Japanese pact was signed. See Stephen Heald (ed.), \textit{Docu-
ments on International Relations, 1936} (London: Oxford
University Press, 1937), pp. 299-300. See also German for-

eign office to all German diplomatic missions, Berlin,
September 30, 1937, \textit{Documents on German Foreign Policy}, ser.

\textsuperscript{45}Ciano, \textit{Ciano's Diplomatic Papers}, p. 146; Wiskemann,
military ties, highlighted by the results of Mussolini's visit to Germany and by Italy's adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact, naturally had a significant impact on relations between Rome and Vienna. Despite the duce's statements that Austro-Italian friendship had in no way been affected by his meeting with Hitler, Austrian leaders noticed that alterations had nonetheless occurred in Italy's attitude toward their country. The Palazzo Chigi admittedly continued to reassure the Austrian foreign office of its support for Austrian independence, but these promises lacked their earlier strength and sincerity. At the same time, Rome's support of Berlin's demands for closer Austro-German cooperation indicated that she had accepted German preeminence in Central European affairs.\textsuperscript{46} This transformation in Italian-German relations was clearly evident during the Rome Pact conference held in Budapest on January 10-12, 1938. Although the three countries exchanged the usual pledges of economic and political assistance,\textsuperscript{47} Rome placed


considerable emphasis upon Austrian and Hungarian adherence to the principles of the Rome-Berlin Axis and the Anti-Comintern Pact as the price for her future support.\textsuperscript{48} In his private conversations with Schuschnigg, Ciano also stressed the importance of Austria's continued observance of the "Gentlemen's Agreement" and her cultivation of friendly relations with Germany as providing the most secure basis for her future independence.\textsuperscript{49}

The results of the Budapest meetings reinforced the view in Vienna that some sort of new détente with Berlin was imperative. Indeed, as a consequence of the expansion of Nazi terrorism during the summer and fall of 1937\textsuperscript{50} and the weakening of Italian support following the Hitler-Mussolini talks in September, the Austrian government had already initiated diplomatic negotiations with Germany. During the end of October, 1937, the Austrian foreign office sought to arrange a meeting between Schuschnigg and

\textsuperscript{48}Berger-Waldenegg to Schmidt, Rome, January 25, 1938, Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Neues Politische Archiv, Karton LXXXVI, No. 50,876, Fos. 796-797; German minister in Hungary to the German foreign office, Budapest, January 12, 1938, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. D, Vol. I, p. 173; Ciano, Tagebücher 1937/38, pp. 78, 86-88.

\textsuperscript{49}Ciano, Tagebücher 1937/38, pp. 85-86; Wischmann, The Rome-Berlin Axis, p. 91.

\textsuperscript{50}Incidents of Nazi terrorism during the summer and fall of 1937 are discussed in Von Papen to Hitler, Vienna, May 26, 1937, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. D, Vol. I, pp. 423-427; Von Papen, Memoirs, pp. 390-394 and 397-398; Eichstädt, Von Dolifü zu Hitler, pp. 170-175 and 194-195; Fuchs, Showdown in Vienna, p. 59.
 Göring to discuss Austro-German differences. The German air minister subsequently declined this invitation; however, the idea of a meeting between German and Austrian leaders was not abandoned. Before the end of December, 1937, Von Papen suggested to Schmidt a proposal for a conference between Hitler and Schuschnigg. After some delay, the Austrian government accepted this offer "in principle" on January 7, 1938.

Following the Rome Pact conference on January 10-12, 1938, discussions involving Von Papen’s proposed meeting between the chancellors of Austria and Germany began in earnest. Questions concerning the date and the location for the conference as well as the topics to be discussed occupied Austro-German negotiations for the next month. In his talks with Austrian officials, Von Papen apparently declined to commit his government to any detailed agenda for the meeting. He did assure Schuschnigg, however, that the July Agreement would be reaffirmed and that no demands would be made which transgressed Austria's independence.

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52 Von Papen, Memoirs, pp. 409-410; Austrian foreign office memorandum, Vienna, January 8, 1938, Der Hochverratsprozess gegen Dr. Guido Schmidt, pp. 556-557.

53 Von Papen, Memoirs, p. 411; Schuschnigg, Austrian Requiem, pp. 10-11; Austrian foreign office memorandum, January 8, 1938, Der Hochverratsprozess gegen Dr. Guido
Following the German minister’s return from Berlin on February 7, Schmidt and Von Papen cleared up the few remaining procedural details and set the date for the meeting of the two chancellors at Berchtesgaden for February 12, 1938.

Schuschnigg's trip to Berchtesgaden marked a fateful turning point along the path that eventually led to Austria's absorption by the German Reich. The Austrian chancellor came to the meeting hoping to achieve a new Austro-German rapprochement. He was swiftly disillusioned by Hitler. After berating Schuschnigg for betraying the "German cause," the Nazi leader presented him with a series of demands which virtually abrogated Austria's independence. The ultimatum obliged the Austrian government to recognize National Socialism as compatible with the existing political structure of the Austrian state, to admit National Socialists into the Fatherland Front, to release all persons arrested as a result of their involvement in National Socialist activities, and to cooperate more closely with Germany in military matters. Hitler also demanded that several changes be made in the Austrian cabinet; Arthur Seyss-Inquart and Hans Fischböck, both sympathetic to the Nazi cause, were to be appointed minister of interior and minister of finance. The Austrian chancellor had three

Schmidt, pp. 556-557.

Schuschnigg, Austrian Requiem, 12-19.

Protocol of the Berchtesgaden conference, Berchtesgaden, February 12, 1938, Documents on German Foreign
days in which to secure the acceptance of these demands by the other members of his government. Once he had accomplished this, Berlin would issue a statement reaffirming the July Agreement.\textsuperscript{56} Unable to resist, Schuschnigg accepted these demands, and on February 15, 1938, the Austrian government officially indicated its adherence to the Berchtesgaden Agreements.\textsuperscript{57}

In Rome, the results of Schuschnigg's meetings with Hitler were received with a mixture of relief and foreboding. Officially, Mussolini gave the Berchtesgaden Agreements his warm approval and once again reassured the Austrian chancellor of his continued support.\textsuperscript{58} Privately, however, Italian leaders took a far less optimistic view of Austria's future. Ciano, in his dispatches to the Italian ambassador in London, Dino Grandi, indicated that Italy

\begin{itemize}
\item 56\textsuperscript{Schuschnigg, Austrian Requiem, pp. 26-27; Von Papen, Memoirs, p. 421.}
\item 57\textsuperscript{Von Papen to the German foreign office, Vienna, February 14, 1938, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. D, Vol. I, pp. 518-519; German foreign office memorandum, Berlin, February 15, 1938, ibid., pp. 520-521; Schuschnigg, Austrian Requiem, pp. 25-29; Brook-Shepherd, The Anschluß, pp. 65-71.}
\item 58\textsuperscript{Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, p. 163; Berger-Waldenegg to Schmidt, Rome, February 16, 1938, Der Hochverratsprozess gegen Dr. Guido Schmidt, p. 565; Schuschnigg, The Brutal Takeover, p. 226; Ciano, Tagebücher 1937/38, pp. 104-108; Wiskemann, The Rome-Berlin Axis, p. 95.}
\end{itemize}
found herself "between the fourth and fifth act of the Austrian affair" and that in his own opinion Germany was already at the Brenner frontier. Mussolini's views concerning the eventual outcome of the Berchtesgaden Agreements differed little from those of his foreign minister. Although the duce instructed Ciano privately to inform the Wilhelmstraße that he was annoyed at not having been consulted about the agreements concluded between Hitler and Schuschnigg, Rome did not send a formal protest to Berlin. Italy, clearly, had accepted the idea of an eventual union of Austria and Germany. All that remained for her to do was to extract herself as gracefully as possible from her commitments to Vienna. The Palazzo Chigi, therefore, tactfully ignored subsequent Austrian appeals for assistance and sought to discourage Schuschnigg's plans for a plebiscite since they would probably provoke a military response from Germany. Indeed, Mussolini warned the Austrian chancellor that in making this appeal to the Austrian electorate he was playing with a bomb which could easily go off in


60 German foreign office memorandum, Berlin, February 18, 1938, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. D, Vol. I, pp. 533-534; Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, p. 163; Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluß, p. 178; Hibbert, Benito Mussolini, p. 87.
When Schuschnigg persisted in his course despite Italian warnings and called for a plebiscite on March 9, 1938, Rome disavowed his actions. 62 Italian premonitions concerning Hitler's probable response to the Austrian chancellor's plebiscite proved to be relatively accurate. On March 11, 1938, just two days after Schuschnigg's appeal to his fellow countrymen, Berlin presented Vienna with an ultimatum demanding his resignation and the appointment of a new government headed by the pro-Nazi minister of interior, Arthur Seyss-Inquart. 63 The Austrian chancellor's efforts to arouse his former Italian protector proved to no avail. Mussolini remained "unavailable" throughout the crisis of March 11, 1938, and the Palazzo Chigi felt itself "obliged to refrain from [expressing] any opinion." 64 Rome, in reality, had no other

61 German foreign office minute, Berlin, March 11, 1938, Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. D, Vol. I, p. 572; Plessen to the German foreign office, Rome, March 11, 1938, ibid., p. 572; Ciano, Tagebúcher 1937/38, p. 120; Brook-Shepherd, The Anschluß, p. 118.


63A more detailed description of these events can be found in Schuschnigg, Austrian Requiem, pp. 41-55; Eich-stadt, Von Dollfuß zu Hitler, pp. 371-426; Brook-Shepherd, The Anschluß, pp. 137-184; and Dieter Wagner and Gerhard Tomkowitz, Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer (Munich: Piper and Co., 1963), pp. 121-238.

64 Schuschnigg, Austrian Requiem, p. 47; Schmidt's testimony of March 1, 1947, Der Hochverratsprozess gegen Dr. Guido Schmidt, p. 63.
choice in this matter. By this time, Italy had become too closely tied to Germany to act in opposition to her. Mussolini's difficulties in Africa, Spain, and the Mediterranean and his reliance upon German support to surmount these obstacles had long ago made it impossible for him to assume an active role in Central European affairs. Consequently, when Hitler's letter explaining his reasons for the invasion of Austria arrived in Rome on March 11, 1938, the duce reluctantly accepted the merger of the two German states. Italy thus allowed Austria to disappear from the map of Europe without raising any serious objections.

Mussolini's acquiescence in the Austro-German Anschluß of March 13, 1938, was but the first of a long series of concessions that he was to make to Hitler during the next seven years in order to preserve the often troubled Rome-Berlin Axis. It was also among the most difficult and least popular of the Italian leader's actions. The Palazzo


67 Subsequent Italian-German relations are thoroughly discussed in Frederick W. Deakin, The Brutal Friendship: Mussolini, Hitler and the Fall of Italian Fascism (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), especially on pp. 73-105, 201-217, 259-275, 356-368, 677-689, and 706-721. See also Kirkpatrick, Mussolini, A Study in Power, pp. 436-649; and Hibbert, Benito Mussolini, pp. 127-159.
Chigi's efforts to minimize the event as the "outcome of a pre-existent state of affairs" that represented the "free expression of the will of the Austrian people." 68 could not hide the widespread disillusionment which prevailed among the public and in government circles. The Italian people, told only a few months earlier that Italy would never allow a union of Austria and Germany were shocked to hear of the German invasion of Austria and the subsequent merger of the two countries. 69 Government leaders were equally upset by these developments and by the way in which Italy had been treated by Hitler. The German leader had informed Rome of his plans only hours before his troops marched into Austria and had largely ignored Italian interests in that country. Many Italian officials also felt very uncomfortable with Germany as their northern neighbor and feared the expansion of German influence in the Alto Adige. 70

The implications of the Austro-German Anschluß, however, went beyond a possible renewal of the German-Italian dispute over the fate of the German minority living in one of Italy's northern provinces. The surrender of Austria to Germany also represented for Mussolini the end of his dream

68 The Times (London), March 14, 1938, p. 14. See also Ciano's remarks to the Fascist Grand Council, as cited in Kirkpatrick, Mussolini, A Study in Power, p. 360.

69 Ciano, Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, p. 201; Kirkpatrick, Mussolini, A Study in Power, p. 361; Hibbert, Benito Mussolini, p. 89.

70 Kirkpatrick, Mussolini, A Study in Power, p. 360.
to extend Italian hegemony to Central Europe. For more than a decade the Italian leader had sought to establish an Italian-dominated bloc in that region in order to check the rising influence of France and the Little Entente. Austria, because of her geographic location in the heart of Central Europe, was the key to the achievement of this goal. In his efforts to influence her domestic and foreign policies, the duce expended large sums of money, initially to supply funds and arms to the Austrian Heimwehr, but later to assist the Dollfuß government. On March 17, 1934, the Italian leader witnessed the fulfillment of his aspirations when Austria and Hungary joined Italy in signing the Rome Protocols. Four months later, however, this dream lay in ruins following the Nazi assassination of Dollfuß on July 25, 1934.

Germany's increased involvement in Austrian affairs, dramatized by the abortive Nazi putsch and the murder of the Austrian chancellor, presented Mussolini with an unforeseen obstacle that threatened to undermine Italy's position in Central Europe. Rome, admittedly, had recognized the potential Nazi danger to Austria shortly after Hitler's appointment as chancellor of Germany in January, 1933. Preferring to emphasize the apparent ideological affinities between Fascism and National Socialism and the common desire of both countries to "revise" the Paris peace settlements, Mussolini minimized Italian-German
differences over Austria. Indeed, the duce initially labored under the mistaken belief that Hitler could be convinced to join his Italian-Austrian-Hungarian coalition. These misapprehensions were soon dispelled, however, by the German leader's support of Nazi interference in Austrian affairs, by his refusal to accede to the Rome Protocols, and by his withdrawal from the Geneva disarmament talks. The assassination of Dollfuß completed the disillusionment. In Rome, government leaders realized that if Italian interests in Austria were to be protected, Hitler had to be stopped. In April, 1935, Italy, therefore, joined with Great Britain and France at Stresa in an effort to check German expansion and preserve the "status quo" in Central Europe.

Mussolini's defense of Austria in July, 1934, and his participation in the formation of the Stresa coalition in April, 1935, indicated the magnitude of the differences between German and Italian policy in Central Europe and the extent to which Italy was prepared to go to prevent German expansion in that area. At the same time, these actions—particularly the formation of the Anglo-French-Italian alliance—also promised to provide a check on Nazi aggression and thereby preserve European peace. Subsequent events, however, shattered these expectations. Within three years after the inception of the Stresa coalition, Italy abandoned her ties with Great Britain and France and formed an
alliance with Germany. Mussolini also yielded to Hitler's demands in Central Europe and accepted the Austro-German Anschluß.

The factors which prompted this alteration in Italy's foreign policy between April, 1935, and March, 1938, were complex and often not entirely under the control of her leaders. The key element in the disruption of the Stresa partnership and the subsequent rapprochement between Italy and Germany, however, involved the duce's expansionist aspirations in Ethiopia. Italy, clearly must bear the primary responsibility for the developments which led to the war in that country. Faced with a number of domestic difficulties, the duce undertook to expand Italian influence in Ethiopia as a means of improving his regime's public image and of enhancing Italy's international prestige. When he found that he could not achieve this goal through diplomacy, the Italian leader resorted to force, thereby provoking the crisis in Anglo-French-Italian relations that led to the disruption of the three-power alliance.

Yet if the Italian government was primarily at fault for the precipitation of the war in Ethiopia and the collapse of the Stresa coalition, Great Britain and France also must share a large portion of the blame. Both London and Paris had been informed about Rome's plans for expansion in Ethiopia long before the crisis developed and had taken no steps to check the Italian leader. Quite the
contrary, the British and French governments on several occasions had given Mussolini the impression that they approved his East African venture, thereby encouraging the duce to commit himself publicly to his colonial plans in that area in May, 1935. By their actions London and Paris unwittingly made a war in Ethiopia almost unavoidable. Once he had pledged his government to the conquest of that country, Mussolini could not change his policy without seriously damaging his public image and endangering his regime.

The League of Nations condemnation of Italy's aggressive actions in Ethiopia in October, 1935, brought the developing international crisis between Rome, Paris, and London into the open. The British and French support of the League's sanctions against Italy infuriated Mussolini and led to the rapid deterioration of relations between the three countries. Rome viewed these actions by her Stresa allies as a clear violation of their previous assurances to her concerning their lack of interest in Ethiopia and as a flagrant betrayal of Italian friendship. By their support of the League of Nations, Great Britain and France had demonstrated to Italy that their foreign policy differed from her own on several key issues. Under these circumstances, the Palazzo Chigi felt that an alliance with these two European Powers was devoid of any real meaning. Mussolini, embittered by the recent developments at Geneva,
therefore, abandoned the Stresa coalition.

The war in Ethiopia and the debates in the League of Nations thus cut Italy adrift from her former allies in Western Europe. Several efforts were subsequently made to restore the Stresa coalition, but they all ended in failure. The differences between the three powers in Africa and subsequently in Spain proved to be insurmountable. Faced with the danger of isolation, Italy, therefore, was obliged to seek a rapprochement with Germany, the one European power that had not condemned her actions in Ethiopia. Although many Italian leaders had reservations about where such an alliance might ultimately lead, their country's overriding need to secure the diplomatic support of another power in order to ease her international difficulties forced them to put these doubts aside. Germany's refusal to support the sanctions imposed on Italy by the League of Nations and Hitler's offer to recognize her conquest of Ethiopia greatly facilitated the development of better relations between the two countries. Italian officials were further impressed by the tremendous growth of German military power, especially when compared with the apparent weakness of Great Britain and France.

Yet German friendship was not to be had without a price, and that price was Austria. For Mussolini, the choice between Austria and Germany was not an easy one. Indeed, the Italian leader tried to put off a final decision
on the Anschluss question for as long as possible. From the summer of 1936 until March, 1938, the Palazzo Chigi attempted to resolve Austro-German differences in a manner that would avoid a union of the two states. Rome repeatedly advised Vienna to make a number of concessions to the National Socialists in the hope that a compromise could be found which would preserve Austrian independence. However, Mussolini, regrettably, could offer little more than advice to Schuschnigg. As a result of Italy's involvement in Africa, the Mediterranean, and Spain, her interests had shifted away from Central Europe. The duce's commitments in these other areas consequently forced him to reduce his support to Austria and enabled Germany to expand her influence in that country more rapidly.

The decline of Italy's position in Central Europe and the corresponding growth of German power in that region led to a compromise between Rome and Berlin over Austria. By the time of Mussolini's visit to Berlin in September, 1937, Italy had come to recognize Germany's preeminent position in that country. Rome only expected that she would be consulted before any action was taken that might alter the "status quo" in Central Europe. After February, 1938, however, the Palazzo Chigi abandoned even this position. Schuschnigg's weak defense of his country during his talks with Hitler and the apparent lack of British or French interest in Austrian independence indicated to the
duce that, if he were to attempt to defend Austria, he would have to do it alone. Italy, however, was no longer in a position to challenge Germany in Central Europe. Following the Berchtesgaden meeting Mussolini, therefore, completely surrendered his position as Austria's protector. The Italian leader thereby prepared the way for the Austro-German Anschluß.
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