ENGELBERT DOLLFUSS AND THE DESTRUCTION
OF AUSTRIAN DEMOCRACY

by

REINHART KONDERT

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Thesis Director's signature:

R. John Rath

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Abstract

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Reinhart Kondert

When Engelbert Dollfuss became chancellor of Austria on May 10, 1932, he had no intention of destroying Austrian democracy. The idea of doing away with democracy never became an obsession with him; it was done more out of necessity than desire. Dollfuss' forced alignment with the Heimwehr, a right wing organization motivated by fascist principles, was the first clear indication that Austrian politics were henceforth to move in an anti-democratic direction. The refusal of the Social Democrats to join his coalition in May, 1932, and their continuing obstructionist tactics in parliament discredited not only themselves but also the institution in which they were represented. By March, 1933, the chancellor had become thoroughly disgusted with the parliament of his day, and he became convinced that Austria could not long endure under the present system of government.

The self-dissolution of parliament on March 4, 1933, provided Dollfuss with the opportunity he had been waiting for. Although not certain about the future fate of parliament, he decided that, at least for the time being, he would govern without that defunct body. He decided to rule by governmental decree, instead, and to legalize his actions he revived an old imperial law of 1917, the War Emergency Powers Act. The governmental decree which came on March 7, 1933, banning all
further public meetings and processions and instituting a strict censorship of the press represented the first step in authoritarian rule which the government was from then on to follow. The repressive measures which followed brought the Dollfuss regime progressively closer to the full-fledged dictatorial regime which was proclaimed on May 1, 1934. On that date the chancellor announced the establishment of a Christian, German, authoritarian state organized on a corporative basis and modeled loosely on the fascist state of Italy.

It must be brought out that much of the inspiration to organize Austria on an authoritarian basis came from Mussolini, who saw in a revitalized Austria the best weapon to use in countering Nazi designs on Austria. The Italian dictator agreed to come to Austria's support on condition that the Social Democratic Party be liquidated and that the Republic be converted into a fascist regime. Dollfuss unwillingly agreed to these demands, and the Heimwehr, which was in Mussolini's pay, began systematically to carry out the Duce's requirements. The activities of the Heimwehr leaders led ultimately to the civil war of February 12, 1934, in which the Social Democratic Party was eliminated as a political force in Austrian internal affairs. Its leaders were arrested, its funds were confiscated, and its trade unions were abolished. Austrian democracy was destroyed. With the promulgation of the new constitution on May 1, 1934, the transformation from democracy to authoritarianism was complete.
PREFACE

Any topic dealing with the sudden and violent collapse of a system of government is bound to be a controversial one. My topic is no exception, particularly because the destruction of Austrian parliamentary democracy involved a bloody civil war in which the Austrian Social Democratic Party was eliminated as a political factor. What this means to the historian is that the literature available on this aspect of Austrian history is invariably biased. As a result, the prospective scholar must not only weigh the evidence and determine from which point of view a given piece of work is written, but he must also take care not to fall into the same pitfall of partiality himself. I have tried, therefore, to keep my account as objective as possible, realizing, of course, that complete impartiality is something which must be striven for but can never be attained. That my research has led me to have a somewhat favorable impression of Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss will, I think, become clear to anyone who reads this thesis. I, nevertheless, hope that I have made a basic contribution to the field, if only because I have assembled and interpreted source material which may be of use to fellow students of history.
In the course of writing this thesis I received invaluable aid from a number of people. My greatest debt of gratitude I owe to my thesis director, Professor R. John Rath, whose helpful suggestions and kind words of encouragement, more than anything, helped make this thesis possible. I also wish to thank my colleague, John Haag, whose lively interest in my topic and efforts on my behalf continued to be an inspiration to me. My appreciation also goes out to the staff of Fondren Library, whose services I all too often took for granted but without whose aid the completion of this thesis would have been far more difficult. Finally, in appreciation of the faith that my family has placed in me, I wish to dedicate this thesis to them.
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Engelbert Dollfuss, chancellor of Austria from May 10, 1932, to July 25, 1934, has gone down in history as the man who destroyed Austrian democracy. The more significant events of his chancellorship would certainly seem to bear out this thesis. On March 4, 1933, parliament was dissolved and subsequent meetings were forbidden. On February 12, 1934, the Social Democratic Party was ruthlessly abolished, and its leaders imprisoned. And finally, on May 1, 1934, with the publication of the new constitution, Austria was officially converted from a republic to a dictatorship with supreme authority residing in the hands of the chancellor.

Judging from what has been stated above, one might assume that the transition from a democracy to authoritarianism was a relatively simple matter and primarily due to the actions of Dollfuss. Such an assumption, however, is not well founded. A detailed examination of the demise of Austrian democracy reveals that many of the causes of the destruction of democracy have their roots in events prior to Dollfuss' accession to power. By the early 1930's democracy had fallen into complete disgrace. The democratic system of government had shown itself unable to solve the various social and economic problems of the First Austrian Republic, and a large segment
of the Austrian population was either indifferent to or welcomed the change to authoritarian rule under Dollfuss.

The failure of parliamentary democracy in Austria can be attributed to a number of basic reasons. Austria's two major parties, the Social Democrats and the Christian Socials, were separated by a vast ideological gulf which made any type of agreement between them almost impossible. Austrian politics degenerated into mere obstructionism. Constructive legislation was rare, and, when it was introduced, passed only with the narrowest of margins. Furthermore, the fact that Austrian democracy was forced to grow on the soil of economic impoverishment and the fact that the Austrian people had long been under a system of government in which neither democracy nor the sentiment of patriotism had played an important role made it obvious that parliamentary democracy was not long destined to endure.

Thus, when Dollfuss came to power in 1932 the ideological and political climate was ripe for the establishment of some type of authoritarian rule. Right wing ideas were everywhere on the ascendant, not only in Austria, but throughout all of Europe,¹ and the Austrian people, having witnessed first hand the ineffectualness of democracy in Austria, were not averse to seeing the creation of a government which

would restore order and stability and hopefully bring with it some alleviation of their economic plight. The conditions under which Dollfuss came to power demanded forceful and determined action. Ever since the collapse of the Bodencreditanstalt in 1930 the economy was almost in total ruin. Both inflation and unemployment were rampant. When the National Socialists began a "terror campaign" in the spring of 1933 the need for strong and definite action became all the more apparent.  

When Dollfuss assumed the duties of chancellor on May 10, 1932, he had no intention of doing away with democracy. Nevertheless, the inclusion in the cabinet of the leaders of the Heimwehr, a para-military organization motivated by fascist principles, made it clear in which direction the Austrian government was henceforth to move. In spite of his heavy dependence on the Heimwehr, Dollfuss was by no means committed to an authoritarian course of action in May, 1932. It was only after Dollfuss' several encounters with the leaders of the Social Democrats and their vigorous opposition to his economic reform measures in the Nationalrat that he may first have contemplated doing away with the democratic system of government.  

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The first step in the direction of dictatorial rule came on March 7, 1933, with the promulgation of a governmental decree prohibiting all further public meetings and processions and imposing a strict censorship of the press for the purpose of maintaining "order and security in these troubled times." The initial impetus towards rule by decree came, not from Dollfuss, but from the tragic suicide of parliament on March 4, just three days earlier. On that date all three presidents of the Nationalrat had resigned over a relatively minor parliamentary squabble in the hope of bringing some of their highly aroused fellow compatriots to their senses. It was only later realized, after parliament had adjourned, that with the resignation of its three presidents also went its legal means of reconstituting itself, since only its three presidents were empowered to reconvene parliament.

The significance of the dissolution of parliament was not lost on Dollfuss. Perhaps this was the opportunity he

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had been waiting for to put his country on a firmer footing. For the moment at least, Dollfuss decided to put parliament on the sidelines and rule by governmental decree. But, the increasing propaganda and terror tactics of the Nazis drove Dollfuss to ever greater dependence on authoritarian rule. The refusal of the Social Democrats to join the Dollfuss coalition in January, 1934, forced the chancellor completely into the hands of Mussolini and the Heimwehr. His dependence on Italy led to the ultimate destruction of Social Democracy on February 12, 1934, and to the promulgation of a new constitution on May 1, 1934, organizing Austria on an authoritarian basis.

This paper will attempt to discuss in greater detail the various causes and events leading to the destruction of Austrian democracy. Emphasis will be placed on the two years in which Dollfuss was chancellor when parliamentary democracy actually came to an end. The role of Dollfuss will, of course, be stressed, and the leading roles played by the Heimwehr and Mussolini in the destruction of democracy will receive special attention. The first chapter will be primarily a biographical sketch of Dollfuss briefly relating his rise up the ladder of success from a peasant leader to chancellor. The second chapter will be devoted to a discussion of events from May, 1932, to the dissolution of parliament on March 4, 1933. The third chapter will concern itself with the progression of events from March 4 to the establishment of an
authoritarian regime on May 1, 1934.

Any analysis of the Dollfuss regime must, of course, include a study of the central figure, Engelbert Dollfuss. Only by considering the formative influences of Dollfuss' life—his peasant background, his service in the Habsburg army, and his work as Austria's leading agrarian reformer—can we hope to come to any real understanding of his actions during his chancellorship. A closer look at Dollfuss' background reveals that he did not embark on an authoritarian course to satisfy any aspirations of personal power. He sought to find in determined and forceful action a means to solve Austria's growing domestic and foreign problems. Dollfuss' military service and his later career as an agrarian reformer show quite clearly that he was a man who favored authoritarian methods. His subsequent actions as chancellor after March, 1933, can to an extent be explained by his predilection for authoritarian rule. These, then, are only some of the points which become clarified when considered in the larger framework of Dollfuss' entire span of life.

Dollfuss was born on October 4, 1892, at a farmhouse in the village of Texing, in Lower Austria. He was an illegitimate child born to Josepha Dollfuss and a man whose name, according to the general consensus of the villagers, was Joseph Wenninger, who seems to have been a local laborer and thus unacceptable to the Dollfuss household. The stigma of
illegitimacy never settled upon the Dollfuss name, and before her little son was one year old, Josepha had married Leopold Schmutz, a peasant from the nearby village of Kirnberg who had thirty acres of land.

Dollfuss spent the next eleven years of his life in the Schmutz household. His life as the son of a peasant farmer was, on the whole, hard and difficult, though by no means unhappy. Here at the Kirnberg farm Dollfuss was able to witness first hand the joys and sorrows experienced by countless other peasant families; here, subjected to the hardship and suffering of the typical Austrian peasant, Dollfuss developed a life long attachment to the peasant and his cause, his love of the soil, and his devotion to hard work. Life, indeed, consisted mainly of arduous toil, and what little free time there was came usually on Sundays or holidays. Thus, under the stern discipline of his stepfather and the austere surroundings of the Kirnberg farm, little Engelbert (or Engl', as he was called) grew to manhood. His peasant background left a deep and permanent impression on his mind; it was the most important influence of his life, and goes far to explain why, as chancellor, he was to devote a great deal of attention to the alleviation of the peasant's economic plight. It also shows why Dollfuss was usually able to count on peasant support for his policies. As chancellor, Dollfuss never tired of alluding to his humble beginnings,
and he often referred to the peasant as the backbone of Austrian society.6

Dollfuss' stiff and spartan-like upbringing in no way repressed his lively and gay personality. This he seems to have inherited from his mother, as he did his small stature (he was four feet eleven inches tall full grown). Dollfuss' strong personality, his jovial and infectious spirit, his love of life, his urge to be in the center of things, and his capacity for hard work very early made him the central figure of his family and later his classmates. These attributes which Dollfuss developed in childhood never left him and, if anything, became reinforced as he grew older. They were in large part responsible for his rapid rise to power and probably also help explain why Dollfuss favored a forceful and determined course of action as chancellor.

At any rate, as a schoolboy in the village of Kirnberg, Dollfuss' zeal and industriousness brought him to the attention of the village schoolmaster, a Mr. Helmberger. It was he who, together with the village pastor, Simon Veith, decided that Dollfuss was quite an extraordinary boy and that he should be sent to the boy's seminary in Hollabrunn to study for the priesthood. Dollfuss was overjoyed by their decision since he had long evinced a desire to make the

priesthood his vocation, and his deep religious conviction, his devout and pious nature, and his strict Catholic upbringing were all adequate preparation for this next important step in his thus far uneventful life.

All were agreed, then, that Dollfuss should begin his studies at the seminary at Hollabrunn just thirty miles north of Vienna. It was found, however, that Dollfuss' family was unable to provide the necessary funds for his studies and that unless some other means of support were found all plans to send Dollfuss to the seminary would have to be dropped. It was Pastor Veith who came up with a solution by making an eloquent plea to his bishop, Dr. Schneider, to give Dollfuss a free place at the seminary. The supplication proved effective.

In the autumn of 1904 Dollfuss, not yet twelve years old, presented himself at Hollabrunn to begin his studies. The first year at Hollabrunn proved quite an ordeal for the young Dollfuss, both to his courage and his brain. To the consternation of his patrons and himself, Dollfuss failed the first year's qualifying exam and had to repeat his first year's studies as an external student before he could be readmitted to the seminary. Although this was never to happen again, it brings out the point that Dollfuss was always more noted for his industriousness than for his brilliance, and what he lacked in native ability he usually compensated
for by his tremendous capacity for work and his sheer determination and willpower.

The next nine years were spent in diligent preparation for the clerical profession. By 1913 Dollfuss had successfully completed his studies at Hollabrunn, and in 1914 he enrolled in the University of Vienna to begin the last leg of his journey to become a priest. But the interval between these two years was an extremely important one for the prospective university student. It was during this time that Dollfuss began to have serious doubts about the choice of his future vocation. Perhaps he was not cut out to be a priest after all. The very fact that he began to cast doubts about his choice convinced him all the more that unless he could become a good priest he would rather not become one at all. While at Hollabrunn Dollfuss had been introduced to many new forces and influences, and as these began to leave their mark upon him Dollfuss came to realize that as a priest, he would not be able to give full play to his numerous talents and interests. His future, he was certain, lay in working with people and their problems, and as cleric he would simply be operating in too restricted a field to aid his fellow man. Even though he had enrolled as a theological student at the University of Vienna, Dollfuss had by January, 1914, decided to abandon the religious orders because, as one of his biographers later stated, at Vienna Dollfuss saw that the "great world of actions and ideas" did
not necessarily lie in the church.\textsuperscript{7}

Thus, after much mental reservation Dollfuss decided to change his studies from theology to law. Before he made his decision, Dollfuss had taken counsel with theological professor Dr. Gustav Müller and philologist Otto Kemptner, and with their support and encouragement, he shifted his interests to the legal field. But how was Dollfuss going to relate this to his parents who had set their hearts on their son becoming a priest? This task proved more difficult than making the initial decision. Upon seeing his stepfather after his return to the farm, Dollfuss fell on his knees and begged his parent to forgive him for his change of vocation. The old Mr. Schmutz, undisturbed, replied that the important thing was not whether one chose this or that vocation but that one should follow a moral and upright path.\textsuperscript{8}

Dollfuss had barely become accustomed to his new surroundings in Vienna when Austria declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914. The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand just a month before had cast ominous clouds on the horizon, and Dollfuss realized that war was imminent. With the declaration of war, Dollfuss, as many others, went to the nearest


\textsuperscript{8}This incident is interestingly described in Hans Maurer, \textit{Kanzler Dollfuss} (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1934), p. 17.
recruiting office to enlist. The prevailing atmosphere of apprehension and joy must no doubt have captured Dollfuss' imagination, and his disappointment was doubly depressing when he found that due to his small size, he was unaccepta-
ble for military service. Discouraged but by no means ready to give up, Dollfuss traveled to St. Pölten, in Upper Austria, near his home town, in hope of being accepted there. To his astonishment, he found the same doctor who had examined him at the Military Selection Tribunal in Vienna in the recruit-
ing station at St. Pölten. But this time Dollfuss was de-
termined not to be turned down. He insisted that he was fit for service, and when the time came for his height to be measured, he stood on his toes to give him the added inch or so to meet military requirements. The tribunal was so impressed by his zeal and stubbornness that they simply did not have the heart to turn him down.

In the autumn of 1914 Dollfuss entered the Habsburg imperial army and became a member of the famed Kaiser-
schützen, an elite army corps. As a diminutive and raw re-
cruit, Dollfuss was much ridiculed and laughed at, but he soon showed himself possessed of qualities lacking in others, and through bravery, calm intelligence, and common sense, he soon won the respect of all around him, both friend and foe. As an army officer, he developed those qualities which had marked him out as student and later made him famous as chancellor. At the Italian front Dollfuss distinguished
himself on numerous occasions for his tenacity and valor. The fact that he won eight medals for bravery and valor give eloquent testimony to his service on the front.

There are, of course, numerous tales of Dollfuss' exploits in the army which could be related here. More important than these events in themselves is the effect of Dollfuss' war experience on his subsequent actions as chancellor. The three years that Dollfuss spent in military service no doubt had a profound effect on his character. It certainly hardened him both physically and mentally and implanted in him a military bearing which he never discarded. It also accustomed him to exercising authority and left him with a tendency to think in military terms. Moreover, his army background inclined him to deal forcefully and speedily with any opposition, especially during his chancellorship when Dollfuss saw himself besieged from all sides, and left his opponents with the impression that he wanted to become a dictator.

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9 For these details, see especially J. D. Gregory, Dollfuss and his Times (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1935); and Johannes Messner, Dollfuss an Austrian Patriot (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1935), pp. 35-37.

10 Franz Winkler, Die Diktatur in Österreich (Zürich: Orell Füssli Verlag, 1935), pp. 201-203.

After more than thirty-seven months on the Italian front, Dollfuss returned to Vienna to resume his study of law. He was now older in both age and experience; he was determined to finish his schooling as quickly as possible and then perhaps go into private business as a lawyer or perhaps even go into politics. But the Vienna to which he returned was a far different place than he had known, and it became much more difficult to realize his plans than he had assumed. The great Austro-Hungarian empire had broken up, and a republic was declared on November 12, 1918.

The viability of the new state proclaimed on November 12 seemed to be highly questionable. Austria's greatest problem after the war was undoubtedly her helpless economic condition. Trade relations with the rest of the Danube Valley were completely disrupted. The well-being of the monarchy had depended on the close cooperation of the various parts of the empire. After the monarchy's defeat in the Great War and the establishment of high protective tariffs by the Succession States, the continued existence of the new state was doubtful and entirely at the mercy of the Western Powers. Austria's bad economic condition continued to be a serious problem throughout the twenty-year existence

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of the Republic and played a most significant role in Austrian politics.

Just a few examples will suffice to indicate the extent of the economic disruption. For instance, in the past cotton yarn which had been spun in Austria was woven in Bohemia, and Bohemian goods were made into finished products in Austrian clothing factories. Styrian steel works had used Moravian coke, and those in Moravia had used Styrian ore. But now, with the break-up of the empire and the creation of the Czechoslovakian state, Austria was left with an excess of spindles and ore and with a scarcity of looms and hard coal. Austria's shortage of fuel was especially serious. After the war, Austria was barely able to produce thirty per cent of her soft coal supplies and possessed no hard coal at all. In Styria she had one of the largest deposits of iron ore in all of Europe, but had no hard coal to go with it. Also, Austria's textile industry, which employed nearly 70,000 workers, had to import almost all of its raw materials from abroad. In spite of repeated attempts by Austrian officials to procure the necessary resources from abroad, Austria was refused the needed raw materials because many of the neighboring states still harbored feelings of hatred towards her and also because of Austria's lack of barter goods and her neighbors' own pressing need for these raw materials.
Austria's agricultural situation was equally deplorable. Her needs required her to import two-thirds of her wheat, one-third of her barley, one-fifth of her oats, and one-fifth of her rye. Meat also had to be imported. In fact, Austria's food and meat imports amounted to thirty-seven per cent of her total imports after the war.  

To give just one illustration, Vienna's consumption of milk before the war amounted to about 900,000 liters daily. By 1916 this was reduced to 145,000 liters; by January, 1919, to 75,000; and by February, to 30,000 liters daily. Consumption was by law limited to children under two years of age. Austria's shortage of milk after the war points out in vivid terms the miserable state of her economy. The fact that the economy continued to be on shaky ground for the next fifteen years helps explain the instability of Austrian politics between the two World Wars.

The economic plight of the Republic fostered the growth of extremism and also caused the Austrian people to lose what

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14Ibid., p. 37.


16An explanation of the failure of the Austrian Republic on purely economic terms can be found in Erich Hans Wolf, Katastrophen Wirtschaft: Geburt und Ende Österreichs 1918-1938 (Zürich: Europa Verlag, 1939).
little faith they had in their country. This double effect, indeed, proved disastrous for the existence of the Republic. Nowhere was extremism in politics more evident than in Austria. Austria's two major political parties, the Social Democrats and the Christian Socials, although working in close cooperation immediately after the war, were by the early 1920's separated by two widely divergent ideologies. This divergence only increased with the passage of time, and by the time of Dollfuss' chancellorship Austria was divided into two warring camps consisting of the Social Democratic Party and its party guard, the Schutzbund, and the Christian Social Party and its appendage, the Heimwehr.

An additional effect of Austria's economic impoverishment was to instill in the Austrian people a feeling of disillusionment. The people tended to blame the government for their economic plight, and, with the continued inability of the government to alleviate their material suffering, they began, not only to lose faith in their leaders and the democratic form of government, but began also to look to other means of salvation. The failure of the Austrian parties to resolve their differences and the inability of the government to improve the lot of its people had by the early 'thirties led to the complete discrediting of parliamentary democracy and helped pave the way for the destruction of
democracy by Dollfuss.¹⁷

One final effect of Austria's economic ruin after the war, which played a definite role in the destiny of the republic, was the strong Anschluss sentiment it created among the Austrian people. The Anschluss sentiment, though strongest immediately after the war, continued to be a factor of importance right up to 1938, when Austria was incorporated into the German Reich. The importance of the strong sentiment for union with Germany should not be underestimated, for it shows that the Austrian people, right from the beginning, doubted the viability of their own country. This self-doubt inhibited the growth of a feeling of loyalty towards their own state. The desire for union with Germany also existed because of the strong blood tie which the Austrian people felt they had with the Germans to the north. Most Austrians, in fact, considered themselves German first and Austrian second and, therefore, felt that union with Germany was only natural, especially since they were now no longer a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire.¹⁸


The feeling among the Austrians that they were German first and Austrian second can be traced back to the Habsburg monarchy. It is important to realize that many of the Republic's illnesses were rooted in the Habsburg past. One of the most significant weaknesses, as we have mentioned before, was the Republic's inability to inspire any confidence and faith in its people. This absence of any sentiment of loyalty and the failure of the Austrian people to develop any feeling of devotion to their state proved, more than anything, to be the "ultimate undoing of the Austrian Republic." It can be traced directly back to the Habsburg past.

The legacy of the Habsburg monarchy is very important to the understanding of why the Republic failed to survive. As members of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the Austro-Germans had never known any sentiment of patriotism. Their allegiance was not to the state but to the emperor, who acted as the primary unifying force in the multinational empire. It was the emperor's policy to "manipulate the rival national and social forces within the State in order to ensure predominance of Imperial influence." Thus, with the collapse of the empire the Austrian people were faced with

20 Ibid., p. 13.
the task of building a new national state which differed considerably from the one they had been used to. The fact that they were unable to create any national consciousness in their new state ultimately led to its demise. The Germans of Austria had never been forced to form a united national group as had the other nationalities. Due to their privileged status in the empire, the Austro-Germans had always concentrated their loyalty upon the Habsburgs who, on the whole, followed a supranational policy; but, by exercising their control through the medium of the German language and German culture, they put the German nationality in a somewhat dominant position. With the break-up of the empire, the Germans lost any unifying forces they had previously possessed and were thus ill equipped to meet the demands of their new national state. Furthermore, the removal of the emperor as a centripetal influence saw a shift in the balance of power from the central government to the various Austrian provinces.

This provincial sentiment was intensified due to the peculiar economic circumstances after the war. As we have noted before, Austria, especially Vienna, had been accustomed to receiving its provisions from all parts of the empire, but, with the dismemberment of the empire, Austria was forced to rely on her own resources for food. These were, of course, quite inadequate to feed her entire population. The
industrial regions suffered most, and the only way that they could be kept from starvation was to introduce a central requisitioning system. The food-producing provinces resented having to ship their produce to Vienna since they were barely able to grow enough to keep themselves alive. This resentment became all the more intense because of the differences between predominately Social Democratic Vienna and the Christian Social provinces—a factor which was of extreme importance to the Republic's history. The divergence between "red" Vienna and the provinces was not limited simply to the political sphere, but it included every aspect of life. Vienna and the provinces lived to a great extent in two different and antagonistic worlds.21 This hostility between the provinces and Vienna was certainly not conducive to the development of a healthy patriotism. It colored all Austrian politics with a bitterness which simply alienated the people from the central government and led them to believe that the government was run, not by responsible leaders, but by corrupt party officials. Austrian politics did indeed degenerate into party rule, and the impression that this left on Dollfuss cannot be underestimated. It influenced him, as it did many other people, to become completely disenchanted with parliamentary democracy and to look to more effective means of running the

21Ibid., pp. 1-3.
Thus, to sum up what we have said so far, we have tried to make the point that the Austrian Republic created after the war was in almost all respects unfit to lead a separate existence as a unified national entity. Her economy was, and continued to be, in an almost perpetual state of flux; her people were demoralized and bitter and unconcerned with the internal state of affairs; and Austria's leaders were motivated more by party ideology than the interests of their country. It was Dollfuss who first attempted to play down party loyalty and inculcate in his people a new spirit of devotion and patriotism in their state.

Immediately after the war Dollfuss did not believe that Austria should be an independent state. As many of those around him, he felt that Austria's destiny was tied up with her neighbor's to the north. After the war Dollfuss favored, not only an economic, but also a political, tie with Germany. This belief may at first seem difficult to reconcile with Dollfuss' out-and-out rejection of Anschluss as chancellor. An answer to Dollfuss' dramatic shift from pro-Anschluss to anti-Anschluss, can, however, be found. Dollfuss was always closely attached to the German ideal and, in fact, never tired of trying to bring his Austrian patriotism in harmony with it. His renunciation of the Anschluss during his chancellorship represents not really a
change from his earlier beliefs but is rather a realization by Dollfuss that Hitler's Germany signified a gross vulgarization of German culture and history. Perhaps he came to believe that Austria was now the only true representative of German culture and giving in to Hitler would simply be a betrayal of the German ideal and, thus, to his innermost convictions. As chancellor, Dollfuss did not reject Pan-Germanism but merely subordinated it to his now much stronger Austrian patriotism.22

At any rate, Dollfuss' agitation for union with Germany during his student days in Vienna is an established fact. To put his thoughts into action, he joined the "Franco-Bavarian," a German-Catholic student organization which came out strongly for union with Germany. Dollfuss' activities in the Franco-Bavarian were of such significance that he was shortly elected its senior officer. Under his leadership, the organization soon expanded to include other groups and began to make contact with similar organizations in Germany. One of these, the "German Community," was a group which represented Pan-Germanism in its most rabid form and even had in its platform a clause which excluded from membership all those "tainted with Jewish blood."23 It is a credit to


23Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, pp. 27-29.
Dollfuss' memory that, as chancellor, he rejected both Anschluss with Germany and any violent form of anti-Semitism.

Coinciding with and then replacing his interests in the Franco-Bavarian were his activities in the Lower Austrian Peasants' Union, in which he received employment on August 5, 1919. Dollfuss' new position was ideally suited with his taste and background. It was as a Lower Austrian peasant child that he came into the world and it was as a Lower Austrian peasant leader that he now began to make a name for himself. As secretary of the peasant union, Dollfuss soon aroused the attention of his superiors, both for his diminutive stature and for his industry and intelligence. Because he threw himself wholeheartedly into his new job and displayed a vigor and zeal far above the ordinary, it did not take long for his superiors to realize that they possessed in their new official an unusual person. They saw in their promising employee the ideal person to study the new agricultural theories of the day and decided, therefore, to send him to Berlin to attend the lectures of the renowned agrarian specialist Professor Seering and the economist Werner Sombart. To provide him with a livelihood, his employers found him a temporary job at the Berlin Preussenkasse Bank. It was here that Dollfuss found his wife-to-be, Alwine Glienke, whom he married on New Year's Eve of 1921 in
his beloved Kirnberg church.\textsuperscript{24}

Their marriage was on the whole a happy affair and was not marred by any serious difficulties. Both possessed the right blend of similarities and contrasts to make their marriage interesting and lasting. Mrs. Dollfuss' temperament, in stark contrast to her husband's, was retiring and reserved but proved amenable enough to become adjusted to the personality of her husband. Both were devout and pious Christians and both shared an equally deep devotion to their family. They were blessed with three children, two girls and one boy, of whom the first, a girl, died while still young. The death of their first child was the only shadow which they experienced together, and on the whole, both enjoyed a happy and harmonious family life.

Just prior to his marriage Dollfuss had received his doctorate of law. With his formal education now completed, he began to devote all of his attention to agricultural reform. In 1922 he played a leading role in the creation of the Lower Austrian Provincial Chamber of Agriculture, and in 1927 he became its director. It was as director of this organization that he established his reputation as Austria's leading agrarian reformer. Here he was able to put into use all that he had learned in Berlin. By virtue

\textsuperscript{24}Maurer, \textit{Kanzler Dollfuss}, pp. 22-26.
of his "mastery of detail, resoluteness, responsibility, and initiative," he was able to revolutionize the entire basis of Austrian agriculture.

Dollfuss' list of achievements as leader of the Chamber of Agriculture are too numerous to be mentioned here. His two major accomplishments were probably his creation of a type of free agricultural cooperative which is still the basis of Austrian agriculture today and his introduction of a plan to provide a system of unified social insurance for the Austrian agricultural community. His creation of the free cooperatives proved a boon to Austria's agriculture. They streamlined all aspects of Austrian peasant life and did much to introduce the new ideas of the 'twenties. In all, sixty-six of these cooperatives were created. They encouraged land, fruit, and vine cultivation, livestock breeding, and afforestation. They controlled marketing, set up educational research centers, and organized the Lower Austrian peasantry into a unified political bloc.

Dollfuss' faith in the free cooperatives was deep founded and lasting. In a speech on June 14, 1934, at the

26 Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, pp. 35-37.
sixteenth International Agrarian Congress at Budapest, he reiterated his strong belief in the cooperatives. According to Dollfuss, the main function of the cooperative was to preserve for the peasant his independence and existence through the regulation of farm prices by a common market controlled by him. The natural foundations of the peasant were left intact since no one stood closer to nature, and no one could "more readily find the natural laws of economic cooperation than the peasant."28

Dollfuss' system of social insurance was equally successful. Behind his scheme lay the fact that an increasing number of field hands were leaving the land for employment in the factories. To stop this flow of labor from the land, Dollfuss proposed a system of insurance designed to give the farm laborers the same protection and social benefits as their industrial counterparts. The first step in his insurance plan was the land worker's sickness insurance law. This was shortly followed by unemployment compensation and old age pensions. The main beneficiaries of these laws were the farmhouse servants and the hired field laborers, although even the richest farmers could avail themselves of the new social insurance benefits. In the late twenties

28For the full text of this speech, see Weber, Dollfuss an Österreich, pp. 156-160.
the Agricultural Insurance Institute, under which the new laws were instituted, had more than 500,000 subscribers of all types and from all of Austria. This alone attests to its success if nothing else.29

With the passage of these laws, Dollfuss' reputation became secure. Cabinet officials and members of parliament regularly began to confer with him on agricultural problems and even began to leave him with the responsibility of drafting the bills and preparing them for introduction to parliament. His fame also began to spread abroad. In 1928 he represented Austria at the International Agrarian Institute held in Rome, and in 1929 he was Austrian representative to the International Agrarian Congress in Bucharest. In 1930 he was appointed as agrarian expert on the Economic Committee of the League of Nations. Part of his job was to give lectures in capitals throughout Europe. It was also during this time when he was economic adviser to the League of Nations that Dollfuss championed bilateral protective tariffs between two countries whose economies were complementary. It was not until later, as minister of agriculture and chancellor, that he was able to realize these ideas.

Before being appointed to the ministry of agriculture, Dollfuss was called to head the Austrian federal railways.

29 Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, pp. 39-40.
Again, as in most of his endeavors before, Dollfuss proved to be an unqualified success as an administrator. Within a few weeks of his appointment on October 1, 1930, he worked a near miracle. He began by appointing a new director general, Dr. Franz Strafella, with whom he was able to work in complete confidence and cooperation. Next he put through a reform which saw a drastic reduction in the staff and a similar reduction in wages and the number of pensioners. Finally, by taking over eight administrative sections himself, by working fourteen hours a day, and by reducing corruption and graft to a minimum, he was able to save the Federal Railways from bankruptcy, and in fact, saved the government 159,000 schillings yearly.30

Dollfuss' distinguished service as president of the Austrian Federal railways brought him to the attention of the Ender government. By virtue of his past record as agricultural reformer and his more recent accomplishments as president of the railways, he was called to enter the Ender cabinet as minister of agriculture and forestry on March 18, 1931. In his fourteen months as minister of agriculture Dollfuss was able to apply his agricultural theories on a grand scale. His field of activity was no longer limited to

30Maurer, Kanzler Dollfuss, pp. 30-34.
Lower Austria. He was now concerned with all of Austria. His sphere of influence was not limited to the domestic field but also included Austria's relationship to other countries. To improve Austria's agricultural relationship with her neighbors, Dollfuss instituted a set of tariff reforms which brought Austria's tariffs in line with the rest of the continent. Tariffs, on the whole, were raised and geared to aid Austria's self-sufficiency in food. Priority was given to the growing of wheat to ensure Austria's bread supply. Two other items which were stressed were butter and livestock to decrease Austria's dependence on dairy products and meats from abroad. Austrian farmers were assured minimum profits and relatively stable prices through a central market and close government. The long-range effects of Dollfuss' policies can best be seen by the fact that Austria's self-sufficiency in food had risen to seventy-five per cent in 1937. All in all, as minister of agriculture, Dollfuss again displayed those qualities which had marked him out before and were to mark him out later as chancellor. Those around him knew that he was a man of destiny, and few people were surprised when he was called to lead his country on May 10, 1932, by President Wilhelm Miklas.31

31 Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, pp. 45-48.
Dollfuss' final step in attaining the most powerful office in his country also proved to be the most difficult one. As chancellor, Dollfuss encountered problems of a magnitude unparalleled in his career. They required more than administrative ability or reforming zeal; they demanded every bit of his intelligence, energy, and determination which he had heretofore displayed. The country which he was called upon to govern in 1932 was both morally and materially bankrupt, and it was to the regeneration of the Austrian economy and the regeneration of the spirit of the Austrian people to which he wholeheartedly devoted himself in his new position as chancellor.
On May 10, 1932, Dollfuss was commissioned by President Wilhelm Miklas to form a new government. This proved to be anything but a simple task. No party constituted a majority in the Austrian parliament, and a coalition government had to be formed. In May, 1932, there were 72 Social Democrats, 66 Christian Socials, 10 Pan-Germans, 9 Landbund deputies, and 8 members of the Heimatblock in the Nationalrat.\(^1\) Dollfuss' Catholic and peasant background assured him of the support of the 9 Landbund deputies and the 66 members of the Christian Social Party. His relations with both the Social Democrats and Pan-Germans were friendly, and the possibility of drawing one of these groups into his government was good. The Heimwehr was to be included in his cabinet only if both the Social Democrats and Pan-Germans turned down his offer to collaborate with them.

Dollfuss' first feelers went out to the leaders of the Social Democratic Party. His social reform work in Lower Austria in his days as a peasant leader and as minister of agriculture made him one of the few Catholic leaders acceptable to the left wing of the party. In May, 1932, his personal relations with both Otto Bauer and Julius Deutsch

\(^1\)Huebmer, Österreich, 1933-1938, p. 33.
were good, and the prospects of coming to some kind of an agreement with them seemed favorable. The grand coalition which Dollfuss hoped to form with the Socialists was, however, never realized. His terms for an agreement with the Social Democratic Party were turned down by Bauer and his group. The Socialists had made appreciable gains in the provincial elections of April 24, 1932, and it was believed by the party's leadership that a general election would have to be held if Dollfuss were unable to form a government. Thus, rejecting Dollfuss' offer was a tactical move by Bauer through which he hoped to bring himself and his party to power. Had he accepted Dollfuss' offer the whole history of the First Republic might have been different.

Dollfuss next attempted to draw the Pan-Germans into his ministry. Here, too, he met with failure. The Pan-Germans, under the leadership of Johannes Schober, had originally been a part of the bourgeois bloc but had split from this group in the November elections of 1930. They

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demanded Anschluss with Germany and agreed to support Dollfuss only if he promised to work avidly for Austria's incorporation into Germany—a promise which Dollfuss refused to make. With both the Social Democrats and the Pan-Germans withholding their support, Dollfuss had no other choice but to align himself with the Heimwehr.

Dollfuss had neither foreseen nor desired an alliance with the Heimatblock. It was only after he had been turned down by both the Pan-Germans and Socialists that he attempted to win over that group. The Heimwehr leaders agreed to join the Dollfuss coalition, but their terms were harsh. They demanded the admission of three Heimwehr men in his cabinet. With the support of 8 members of the Heimatblock, 66 Christian Socials, and 9 Bundabund deputies, Dollfuss had a majority of exactly one vote in the Nationalrat. Needless to say, his government was in a very precarious position, and Dollfuss had to take care never to alienate anyone in his coalition since every single vote was crucial.5

The extent to which the Heimwehr was able to exploit its indispensible eight votes was reflected in the makeup of the Dollfuss cabinet. Dollfuss himself retained the portfolios of agriculture and foreign affairs and appointed two Christian Socials, Karl Vaugoin and Kurt Schuschnigg, to

5Huebmer, Österreich, 1933-1938, p. 33.
the ministries of war and justice, respectively. Franz Winkler, the Landbund leader, was given the position of vice-chancellor. The Heimwehr was represented by Guido Jackoncig, as minister of trade, and by two other men who were strongly sympathetic to the Heimwehr; Hermann Ach, who became minister of interior, and Anton Rintelen, who was appointed minister of education. The high proportion of Heimwehr men in the Dollfuss cabinet was a clear indication that democracy was on the decline and proved to be a disastrous occasion in the history of the First Republic. It paved the way for the destruction of the Social Democratic Party in February, 1934, and the establishment of an authoritarian regime on May 1 of the same year.

To fully understand the significance of the inclusion of the Heimatblock in the Dollfuss government, one must briefly examine the origins and previous activities of that organization. The Heimwehr, as the name implies, was originally a defense organization which had sprung up after the war to protect Austria's borders from Yugoslav bandits and marauders. As the threat on Austria's borders disappeared, the Heimwehr shifted its hatred from the foreign foe to the "red" Socialists in Vienna. Its only justification for existence was violence, and its only unifying force became

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6Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, p. 89.
an undying animosity towards the "Austro-Marxists" in Vienna.

The Heimwehr first came into the political limelight in July, 1927, when it was used by chancellor Ignaz Seipel as an extra-police force to help put down a riot by Socialist workers. In the course of the riot a mob set fire to the palace of justice. Although the workers had originally converged upon the justice building to protest against a previous trial in which a group of Frontkämpfer had been set free for killing several Socialist workers, the protest soon spread into a riot. Before long it developed into a nation-wide strike led by the Socialist Party. The effect of these riots on Seipel was to leave him with an even deeper aversion for the Socialists than before the strike had broken out. The July uprising contributed towards his disillusionment with parliamentary democracy and led towards a greater reliance on the Heimwehr.\(^7\)

The growth of Heimwehr influence in governmental circles in Austria saw a proportionate increase of their prestige abroad--especially in Hungary and Italy. Although the Heimwehr had been in contact with other rightist organizations throughout Europe in the early 'twenties, it was not

until the late 'twenties that the Italian and Hungarian governments began evincing a definite interest in the affairs of the Heimwehr organizations in Austria. Both governments saw in the Heimwehr a vehicle to transmit fascist principles in Austria and an instrument to keep the Austro-Marxists in check. In 1928 Mussolini went so far as to offer the Heimwehr leaders one million lire if they agreed to work for the destruction of the Social Democrats and the creation of a fascist regime—a condition which they were more than happy to meet.8

In November, 1930, the movement was for the first time represented in parliament. Six months earlier it had formulated an official party ideology at a party congress held at Korneuburg on May 18, 1930. The "Korneuburg Oath,"9 which was drawn up at this time and which all of the Heimwehr leaders were required to take, is important in that it reveals the movement's strong anti-democratic direction. The oath represented, in capsule form, the out-and-out fascist principles of the Heimwehr. As regards democracy, the oath

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9 The complete text of the "Korneuburg Oath" can be found in Heimatschutz in Österreich (Vienna: Verlag Zoller, 1934), pp. 46-47.
reads: "We repudiate Western parliamentary democracy and the party state." The Heimwehr leaders wanted, instead, a corporate state headed by a "strong national leadership" which was to consist, "not of the representatives of parties, but of leading members of the large corporations and of the ablest, most trustworthy men" in their mass movement.\textsuperscript{10}

At the party congress the Heimwehr leaders also denounced Marxism and called for the reinvigoration of Austrian people and state through instilling in the populace a belief in God and the fatherland. All in all, the oath was the first clear-cut expression of Heimwehr fascist doctrine.\textsuperscript{11} Its tone was such as to indicate that the Heimwehr members of Dollfuss' government were going to bring pressure to bear to influence its chancellor to take an authoritarian course.

By 1932 the Heimwehr began to lose some of its influence. An abortive putsch on September 13, 1931, by the Styrian Heimwehr, by now partly influenced by National Socialist ideology, split the movement into many factions. The main group, under the leadership of Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg, remained aloof from the National Socialist movement. It was this faction which was won over by Dollfuss in May, 1932,

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., p. 47.

and used by him to combat the Social Democrats and the National Socialists. Of course, it must be remembered that even while the Heimwehr leaders were active in Austrian politics, they were still in Mussolini's pay and were used by him to influence the Dollfuss government.  

Even with the Heimwehr now firmly entrenched in high governmental positions, the fate of Austrian democracy was not necessarily sealed—though admittedly it was in a precarious state. At the beginning of his reign Dollfuss was not committed to any program which sought the destruction of democracy. His attitude towards democratic institutions early in 1932 was, if anything, favorable. The fact that he had come to adopt a very distasteful attitude towards democracy by March, 1933, was not due to the Heimwehr members in his cabinet. It was rather caused by the Socialist leaders and their determined opposition to all of Dollfuss' legislation in parliament which discredited not only themselves but also the institution in which they were represented.  


Otto Bauer and his followers were more interested in seeking the downfall of Dollfuss' government than in promoting the welfare of the state. Party ideology was put above the well-being of the country. At least part of the blame for the failure of Austrian parliamentary democracy must also be attributed to the Socialists.

It was due to the obstructionist policies of the Social Democratic leadership that Dollfuss became disillusioned with democracy. The obstructionist tactics displayed by the party's leaders led to a number of clashes in the Nationalrat between the government and the Socialists and did much to embitter relations between them. The first of these encounters concerned the passage of the Lausanne Loan; the second, the appointment of a Heimwehr leader to the Dollfuss cabinet; and the third, the famous "Hirtenberg Arms Affair," which dealt with the smuggling of arms across Austria's borders. All of these clashes left Dollfuss increasingly disappointed with the Socialists and parliament and did much to prepare him for the authoritarian course he was to take after the self-dissolution of parliament on March 4, 1933.

Dollfuss' first serious breach with the Social Democrats was over the passage of the Lausanne Loan. It should be remembered that when Dollfuss came to power Austria was at the height of her second economic relapse. Her greatest
banking establishment, the Creditanstalt, had collapsed in April, 1931, and the debt which it had left behind—about 640 million schillings—had to be assumed by the Austrian government.  

This was a tremendous burden to the government; and, coupled with the high unemployment rate—about 400,000 in 1932—and the huge railway deficit, required such a large outlay of cash that it became imperative for the government to secure some type of foreign loan if it was to exist at all.

Dollfuss was aware of the urgent need for a foreign loan and personally traveled to Switzerland to appeal to the Western Powers to come to his aid. So effective was his plea that on July 15, 1932, an agreement was reached and signed whereby Austria was to receive a loan of 300,000,000 schillings on the condition that she use it to repay her prior debts and that she renounce any attempts at union with Germany.

The securing of the Lausanne Loan was a great personal achievement by Dollfuss, and upon his return to Austria he looked forward to its approval by parliament. Such approval

14Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, p. 90.


was not immediately forthcoming. Both the Socialists and Pan-Germans were adamant in their opposition to the loan because it forbade Anschluss with Germany. Since the government had only a one vote majority in the Nationalrat, the struggle to pass the loan became quite an ordeal. Due to Seipel's death in the middle of the proceedings, Dollfus had to dragoon every member of his coalition to the chamber, and even then he was only saved by the timely death of the Pan-German leader, Dr. Schober. One deputy was carried in by three of his comrades; another tottered up on crutches; and two others came directly from their hospital beds swathed in bandages. By these means Dollfuss was able to defeat a vote of censure on August 3, 1933, by one vote and to secure the final passage of the loan on August 17 by the slim margin of eighty-two to eighty.¹⁷

The debates over the Lausanne Loan, which took place in an almost hostile atmosphere, aroused the tempers of both sides and left Dollfuss somewhat disgusted with the whole affair. He had not anticipated such strenuous resistance to the loan, especially when the need for it was so apparent. The Pan-Germans rejected the loan because of its anti-Anschluss clause. The Socialists refused their approval both because of this clause, and more important,

because the defeat of the bill might also have led to the collapse of the Dollfuss government and, hopefully, to new elections. Their resistance was thus primarily a tactical move with purely selfish motives in mind.\textsuperscript{18}

Dollfuss' second major encounter with the Socialists came over the nomination of Major Emil Fey, the leader of the Austrian Heimwehr, to the position of state secretary for security on October 17, 1932. Fey's appointment to this extremely important position in the Dollfuss cabinet was, indeed, a fateful occurrence since it was he who, more than anyone else, was responsible for the bloody civil war on February 12, 1934. Fey was an inordinately ambitious man totally lacking in scruples.\textsuperscript{19} He never tired of inveighing against the "red menace in Vienna; his hatred for the Socialists was unbounded, and his presence in the Dollfuss government certainly cast an ominous shadow over all subsequent relations with the Socialists.

Fey's notoriety as a ruthless, unprincipled man was well known to the Socialist leaders, and as a result, their


\textsuperscript{19}A good description of Fey is given in Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini: Memoirs of Ernst Rüdiger Prince Starhemberg (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1942), pp. 98-99.
vigorous opposition to his appointment was well justified. To the Socialists, the Fey appointment gave ample evidence that Dollfuss was coming more and more under the sway of the Heimwehr leaders. For these reasons, the Socialist deputies in the Nationalrat did everything possible to force Dollfuss to change his mind. Karl Seitz, the Socialist mayor of Vienna, vigorously protested Fey's nomination and accused him of being an avowed putschist. To the mayor, the presence of Fey in Dollfuss' cabinet heightened the impression that the chancellor was the prisoner of the Heimwehr. He called Dollfuss to task by demanding an explanation to justify his decision.20

The chancellor was apparently offended by Seitz' haughty manner and stinging accusations. Upon the conclusion of the mayor's speech, Dollfuss stormed out of the chamber with his followers, stating that it was beneath his dignity to answer Seitz' charges on the same day. In his reply the following day, the chancellor justified the addition of Fey to his cabinet by declaring the Heimwehr leader was a decorated war hero who had won medals of the highest rank and asserted that he was no putschist since he had sworn to uphold the constitution by the words "so

20 Gulick, Austria from Habsburg to Hitler, Vol. II, pp. 1000-1002. Gulick's account is obviously colored, but it is still a helpful source.
help me God." This answer quite understandably failed to satisfy the Socialist deputies, and the debates which followed Dollfuss' speech were more acrimonious than ever.

The proceedings reached their climax at the close of Fey's speech on October 21, when Dollfuss and Bauer began exchanging very heated remarks. Bauer accused Dollfuss of "defending his this week's opinion." Dollfuss retorted by saying that Bauer had never been a firm believer in the democratic form of government and was, in fact, looking forward to the day when Austria could be ruled by a dictatorship of the proletariat. Upon hearing this, Bauer stepped over to the ministerial bench and replied: "For everyone who is an honest Bolshevik I have respect; for unprincipled knaves I have only contempt, Herr federal chancellor!" Visibly shaken, Dollfuss jumped from his seat and shouted: "Herr President, I call your attention to the fact that the Herr State Secretary Dr. Bauer called me, me the head of the government an unprincipled knave!" After this the whole house was in a state of turmoil, and a recess of nearly two hours was held before the final business of the day was transacted.21

The debates of October 20-21 are important, not only because they signify the growing disillusionment of Dollfuss

21Ibid., pp. 1003-1004.
in democracy; they also reveal his inexperience in the workings of a democratic state. Dollfuss was easily offended, especially when he felt that the dignity of the chancellorship was being slighted, and although some of his enemies claim that this was due to his extremely small stature, a more logical explanation of the chancellor's irascibility lies in the fact that he had never before been subjected to the rough-and-tumble of a political campaign or the give-and-take common in a legislative body. At any rate, the mutual recriminations and the name calling which occurred in the course of these proceedings did not endear the chancellor to the Socialist leaders.

Dollfuss' third clash with the opposition was over the "Hirtenberg Weapons Affair," which concerned the smuggling of rifles and machine guns across Austria's borders from Italy to Hungary. Prince Starhemberg, the major figure in the Austrian Heimwehr movement, had made arrangements with Mussolini and Gyula Gömbös, the Hungarian Minister of War, for an illegal shipment of arms through Austrian territory,

22 According to one Socialist, Dollfuss became dictator because his nervous "hyper-sensitivity could not stand criticism which is essential to a democracy." See Deutsch, Ein Weiter Weg, p. 188.

with the understanding that he would receive 50,000 rifles and a corresponding number of machine guns to be used by his own Heimwehr units. The plan fell through when a group of railway workers in Carinthia found large consignments of these weapons hidden in presumably empty boxcars. The discovery of these weapons caused a great stir not only in Austria but in all of Europe. These arms were obviously not meant for the Austrian army, since it was limited to 30,000 troops by the Treaty of St. Germain. It could only be concluded that some of these guns were intended for the Heimwehr—which of course they were. The Socialists naturally did everything they could to discredit the Dollfuss regime in the eyes of the Western Powers. The Hirtenberg affair was exposed in a series of articles in the Arbeiter Zeitung, the Socialist Party newspaper, and caused considerable embarrassment to the Dollfuss government in foreign circles. Although the affair died down shortly, the impression it left on Dollfuss was of great consequence. It increased his alienation from the Socialist leadership and caused him to have even less faith in the democratic form

24 Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini, p. 93.

of government than before.\textsuperscript{26}

The Hirtenberg affair had barely subsided when parliament committed suicide on March 4, 1933. Dollfuss was by now thoroughly disgusted with the Austrian parliament and the democratic system of government. The self-dissolution of the Nationalrat afforded him the opportunity to rule, at least for the time being, without that defunct body. The death of parliament on March 4, brought to a fitting close the era of parliamentary democracy in Austria, and the manner in which the demise of parliament came about points out the deficiencies of an institution which had long since ceased to function properly.

The details of the dissolution of parliament need not be recounted in any great length, even though the manner in which it took place is very interesting. The deputies of the Nationalrat were discussing disciplinary action to be taken against the illegal activities of a number of striking railway workers. Both the Pan-Germans and the Social Democrats favored light punishment for the workers involved. The vital vote which would have defeated the government's proposal for more severe punishment got mixed up when two ballots with the same name appeared during the vote count. Dr. Karl Renner, the president of the

\textsuperscript{26} Brook-Shepherd, \textit{Prelude to Infamy}, p. 97.
parliament, became thoroughly disgusted by the bitter bickering which this incident aroused and resigned, hoping thereby to put an end to the confusion by casting his ballot against the government proposal. Dr. Rudolf Ramek, the Christian Social president who now took over, foolishly demanded that a new vote be taken, realizing too late that it would mean the defeat of his party's proposal. To avoid this, he also stepped down, leaving Dr. Sepp Straffner, the president of the Pan-German group, in charge. Straffner made no attempt to settle the controversy and also resigned for no apparent reason other than following the example set by Renner and Ramek. The session had not even been formally adjourned; the deputies simply left the chamber, not realizing the significance of what had happened.27

With the resignation of its three presidents the Nationalrat was officially dissolved since only one of its presidents could legally convene a parliamentary session. This was only a formality which could easily have been overlooked. Dollfuss, however, saw in the death of parliament a propitious moment to strike out on a new course of action, although he did not have a clear conception of what this new course of action would be in March, 1933. He was determined, at least temporarily, to do away with a system

27Huebmer, Österreich, 1933-1938, p. 35.
which had by this time become completely discredited in his eyes and in those of the Austrian people.

A brief summary of the basic illnesses of the Austrian parliament indicates quite clearly why that body had fallen into disrepute by the early 'thirties. Under the Constitution of 1920 parliament was given the power to appoint both the federal government and the head of state. Although the Constitution of 1929 did away with these omnipotent powers, the Assembly still acted as if it were responsible to no one. The Austrian people, who had had a long tradition of absolutism, were, if anything, indifferent to parliamentary democracy and, in fact, expressed little concern for parliament's collapse in March, 1933. Furthermore, the frequent squabbles and clashes and the numerous scandals and recurring demonstrations of unpatriotic behavior with which the parliament became associated, aroused both disgust and contempt among Austrians. Thus, when parliament committed suicide the people certainly did not lament its demise. The link between parliament and the people, which had always


29Braunthal, The Tragedy of Austria, p. 97.

been tenuous, was snapped by the chancellor when he refused to allow parliament to reconstitute itself. The governmental decrees which Dollfuss issued on March 7, 1933, brought to a close the era of democracy and ushered in a new era of "Austro-Fascism."  

CHAPTER III

THE END OF AUSTRIAN DEMOCRACY,

MARCH 4, 1933, TO MAY 1, 1934

With the elimination of parliament on March 4, 1933, Dollfuss decided that, at least for the time being, he would govern Austria without that body. At the outset, however, he was still not certain as to precisely what should be done with parliament. In a speech delivered to a peasants' rally on March 5, at Villach, he declared:

"I have always stood on the foundation of parliamentarism and again today as a matter of course I profess my faith in a healthy representation of the people." Dollfuss continued with the observation that if parliament insisted on making itself impossible the government could in no way be held responsible.\(^1\) In other words, he was not yet sure what his next steps would be, but he decided for the time being to govern in an authoritarian fashion.\(^2\)

There were a number of immediate reasons which persuaded Dollfuss to decide to govern without parliament.

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\(^1\)Gulick, Austria from Habsburg to Hitler, Vol. II, p. 1023.

In the first place, his step in an authoritarian direction was given the explicit support of the leading Christian Social deputies. In a meeting held on the same day of Dollfuss' speech at Villach it was decided by the chief Christian Social leaders, including former chancellor Karl Buresch, Karl Vaugoin, the chairman of the party, and Leopold Kunschack, that "now for some time the government must be carried on in an authoritarian fashion until, through negotiations with the opposition, an alteration of the constitution as well as of the rules of procedure of the Nationalrat are secured so that the functioning of the administrative and the legislative organs of the state appear assured."  

The second reason, which was partly responsible for prompting the above statement of the Christian Social leaders and had a definite bearing on Dollfuss' decision, was the German election of March 5, which put the Nazis more firmly in the saddle. Both Dollfuss and the other Christian Social leaders were stunned by the success of the National Socialists in the Catholic districts of Germany. Dollfuss was now more fearful than ever of parliamentary elections in Austria. By doing away with parliament he made sure that the National Socialists would

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not be able to win a similar electoral victory in Austria.

The pressure of the Heimwehr clique must, of course, also be borne in mind. Prince Starhemberg states in his memoirs that it was on his pressing advice that Dollfuss decided to put an end to that "tilting-ground of wildest demogogy, democracy and the parliamentarian system"—presumably to prevent the Nazis from gaining a foothold in the Austrian Nationalrat.

The Heimwehr leaders were, of course, opposed to the democratic system on principle, and the collapse of parliamentary democracy could not help but play into their hands. In their eyes, the dissolution of parliament was but the first step in their long desired goal to establish a fascist regime.

The initial step in the direction of authoritarian government came on March 7, with the promulgation of governmental decrees based on an old imperial law of July 24, 1917: the War Economy Emergency Powers Act. The proclamation of March 7 referred briefly to the paralysis which parliament had inflicted on itself and continued: "However, the leadership of the country does not rest only with the legislature, but equally with the Head of

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4 Starhemberg, Between Hitler and Mussolini, p. 108.
State and the Government. The legal Government appointed by the Federal President is still in office. It is not affected by the parliamentary crisis, for which it was in no way responsible. There is therefore no state crisis."
The proclamation went on to appeal for unity, and to inform the Austrian public that to "secure law and order in these troubled times" all further public meetings and processions were to be banned and a strict censorship of the press was to be introduced.\textsuperscript{5}

This proclamation may be said to be the birth certificate of "Austro-Fascism," that is, dictatorial rule. But the fact that Dollfuss was not yet clear in which direction this governmental placard was to take him can be seen in the sentence which he put at the top of the proclamation in which it was declared that "the Government does not wish to see the country permanently deprived of an effective Parliament serving the common good."\textsuperscript{6} This no doubt represented a genuine intention of the chancellor, but in the violent months ahead it dwindled into an ever-receding hope. Dollfuss was resolved to strengthen the government's power at the expense of the hitherto dominant parliament. That

\textsuperscript{5}Governmental proclamation of March 7, 1933, as quoted in Andics, \textit{Der Staat der Keiner wollte}, pp. 402-403.

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., p. 402.
the police measures issued on March 7 were to lead to the concentration camp of Wöllersdorf Dollfuss was as yet unable to see. Nevertheless, the road on which he started, under constant pressure from the Heimwehr, inevitably led to the persecution of Austrians—whether Nazis or Socialists—for their political beliefs.7

The chancellor showed that he was quite determined to rule without parliament when he prevented the reconvening of the Nationalrat on March 15. On that date, Dr. Straffner, the third president of the lower house of parliament, tried to call the assembly together again by pointing out that the previous session had never been closed. To prevent the assembly from meeting, the government dispatched two hundred policemen to cordon off the chamber and disperse any of the deputies who might show up. In spite of the government's efforts, a rump parliament did manage to meet for ten minutes to voice its last protest.

This first life-or-death crisis is important in that it reveals that the Austrian Socialists were repelled from taking direct action. In this affair and in all the subsequent crises the Socialists insisted on clinging to formalities and refused to act. No serious attempts were made

to resist the ban on demonstrations. The Socialist leaders simply yelled themselves hoarse but refused to call out a general strike while they were still in a position to do so. This same type of passive docility characterized their actions when Dollfuss banned their traditional May Day celebrations and when he outlawed the Socialist paramilitary Schutzband on March 31, 1933.8

In March Dollfuss had not made up his mind about parliament. He apparently came to a final decision during the midst of a completely unrehearsed incident which took place while he made a speech to a group of peasants at Villach on April 2. Like almost all of his speeches, it was a spontaneous affair. In the course of the speech he reviewed the events of the past few weeks and concluded it with the following words:

"And so Austria's Parliament has destroyed itself; and nobody can say when it will be allowed to take up its dubious activities again."9 Dollfuss had barely uttered this sentence when a tremendous applause broke out from his audience which took minutes to subside. This applause, coming as it did from a solid mass of Austrian peasants, was interpreted by Dollfuss as a divine blessing. He later told one of his friends that "in that moment, I felt the finger of God."10

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9Quoted in Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, p. 102.
10Ibid., pp. 102-103.
Coming from anyone but Dollfuss that remark might be construed as a blasphemous utterance. But considering the chancellor's profound and simple piety, it can be interpreted as a genuine belief on the part of the chancellor—a belief to which Dollfuss came increasingly to adhere—that it was his mission to save Austria from both her internal and external foes, no matter what the consequences.\(^\text{11}\)

With parliament now eliminated, it was only logical that the parties should go, too. To accomplish this end and to create a national movement to rival the dynamism of National Socialism, Dollfuss brought the Fatherland Front into being in the middle of May. This nationalist movement was designed to unite the Austrian parties and people and to instill in them a new sense of pride and faith in their country. It was not intended to be a party with a definite program; it represented a principle—the principle that Austria had the right to lead a free and independent existence. It was, above all, a movement to unite the Austrian people and ignite in them the fire of patriotism.\(^\text{12}\) Dollfuss himself briefly outlined the purpose of the Fatherland Front in a letter to Mussolini

\(^\text{11}\)Ibid., p. 103. On Dollfuss' divine mission, see also Bluhm, The Ideology of the Austrian Corporate State, p. 263.

on July 22. He wrote: "The Fatherland Front will be built on the leadership principle; I myself will be the Führer of the Front. The Fatherland Front aims at a non-partisan union of all patriotic Austrians to serve the peaceful, cultural and economic development of a free, independent Austrian State."13

Dollfuss had decided upon the creation of the Fatherland Front for several reasons. He wanted first of all to do away with Austria's parties, which had been the cause of so many of her problems. Secondly, he wished to use the Front as a weapon to combat the Nazis. This he hoped to do by adopting some of the same tactics employed by the Nazis such as parades, demonstrations, flags, and uniforms. Dollfuss also established the Fatherland Front to slight his own party, which had refused to elect him chairman at a party conference of Christian Socials at Salzburg on May 6-7. The reelection of Karl Vaugoin, instead, not only created open animosity between the chancellor and the party chairman, but also embittered Dollfuss' relations with his own party and caused him to bypass more and more the advice of its leaders.14

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The most important inspiration for the creation of the Fatherland Front, however, came from Mussolini, whom Dollfuss visited for the first time in April, 1933. Mussolini regarded a revitalized Austria as the most effective bulwark against the rampageous dictator to the north and wanted to use the Heimwehr to turn Austria into a satellite state. The Italian dictator wanted the Nazis stopped without arousing any ill will between Germany and Italy. He wanted to check Hitler without alienating him from Italy.15

Mussolini suggested that the best way to cut the ground from under the Nazis was to make a "frontal attack on the Social Democrats."16 In a letter to Dollfuss dated July 1, 1933, he exhorted Dollfuss to capitalize to the full on the "anti-Marxist weapon" to prevent the Nazis from becoming the real saviours of the country from Bolshevism. He declared: "That this, the most feared weapon, may be neutralized in their hands, and that thereby the disappearance of Nazism in Austria may be brought about, depends upon Your Excellency." Furthermore, by striking a blow at the Social Democrats in their stronghold in Vienna and by carrying out


the fight against all elements opposed to the authoritarian state, he hoped that "many of those who to-day are active in the ranks of the Nazis will come over to the circle of the National front."¹⁷

These were, of course, Mussolini's long range goals and were not yet known to Dollfuss in April. At any rate, this was the program which the Duce tried to sell to Dollfuss over the next few months, and the bloody suppression of the Socialists in February, 1934, shows that Mussolini was highly successful. It might be argued that the policy with which Dollfuss became connected was inconsistent with his aim of keeping Austria free and independent in that he made Austria a protectorate of Italy instead of Germany. To Dollfuss this was, however, a necessary, if temporary, evil. He regarded the Nazis as a far greater danger than Italy, and he believed that once the National Socialists were defeated he would quite easily be able to throw off the Italian yoke.

Dollfuss was basically right in his thinking. The Nazis did pose a far greater threat to Austria than did Italy, and by following a fascist-directed policy he was able to thwart German aspirations for Anschluss—at least as long as he was alive. But the tragedy of it all, as

¹⁷Mussolini to Dollfuss, July 1, 1933, ibid., p. 185.
far as Austrian democracy and the Social Democratic Party were concerned, is that Dollfuss' increasing dependence on Italian aid meant a concomitant increase in the influence of the Heimwehr in Austrian internal policy. No matter how little Dollfuss desired a clash between the government and the Socialists the presence of men such as Fey and Starhemberg in the Dollfuss cabinet inevitably led to the bloody insurrection of February 12, 1934.

The first tangible results of Mussolini's influence on Austrian domestic affairs was the creation of the Fatherland Front. At this meeting with Dollfuss on April 11 - 17 Mussolini made it clear to the Austrian chancellor that if he expected any aid from Italy the chancellor would have "to carry through a programme of effective and basic internal reforms in the decisive Fascist sense." The creation of the Fatherland Front was only the first of these reforms. The strengthening of the position of the Heimwehr in the Dollfuss cabinet followed shortly thereafter. Fey was promoted from state secretary for public security to minister of public security on May 10, thereby gaining full control of the police. Odo Neustadter-Stürmer, a former Heimwehr member of parliament, became state secretary for public works, and, with Starhemberg's help the "fascist"

\[18\]Ibid.
Fatherland Front was launched in the middle of May.\textsuperscript{19}

As regards foreign policy, Mussolini put forward the suggestion that a closer accord be established between Austria and Hungary. On this issue, too, Dollfuss tried to meet the Duce's demands by inviting the Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös to Vienna. At a meeting on July 9, 1933, the two leaders agreed that Vienna was to keep the Hungarian government informed on subsequent questions dealing with Central European affairs. With respect to developing closer economic relations with Hungary Dollfuss reported to Mussolini that "they are fully agreed that they must continue to develop and broaden their commercial relations. The indispensable corollary for such a development will, I am convinced, be provided by Italy."\textsuperscript{20}

Due to their differing opinions concerning their relations with Germany, Dollfuss and Gömbös were, however, unable to reach full agreement. Hungary was basically on friendly terms with the Hitler regime and wanted to see a rapprochement between Austria and Germany. Both Hungary and Germany were interested in a revision of the peace treaties, whereas Austria was necessarily opposed to such

\textsuperscript{19}Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluss, p. 51.

\textsuperscript{20}Dollfuss to Mussolini, July 22, 1933, Braunthal, The Tragedy of Austria, p. 192.
an idea. But Dollfuss stressed that this "cannot impair common action by both countries on the question of the economic systematization of the Danubian area."\(^{22}\)

Mussolini's letter of July 1, 1933, in which the Italian dictator demanded basic internal reforms, including the suppression of the Social Democratic Party, was answered by Dollfuss on July 22, after he had made a second visit to Italy in June. Dollfuss made no direct reply to Mussolini's contention that a strong anti-Marxist policy would win over the Nazis to the national front. He did, however, agree with him that the Social Democrats would have to be crushed. "We are determined," he assured the Duce, "to drive the Marxists from the positions of power which they still hold as soon as the situation permits it."\(^{23}\) With this statement, as one historian puts it, "Dollfuss committed himself in principle to the policy which finally was carried out in February 1934."\(^{24}\)

In July, 1933, Dollfuss still had no clear conception of how the Socialists were to be driven from their positions


\(^{22}\)Dollfuss to Mussolini, July 22, 1933, Braunthal, The Tragedy of Austria, p. 192.

\(^{23}\)Ibid., p. 189.

of power. He certainly did not foresee the bloody February civil war. The above remark may simply have been made to impress Mussolini. At least, this was the case with many other of the statements in the letter. For instance, Dollfuss also recited his achievements in the domestic sphere and placed emphasis on his efforts to promote Fascism in Austria. He declared: "I have been ceaselessly occupied with preparing the ground for the creation of a strong authoritarian regime which, according to my conviction, is best suited to my country. It is clear that first of all much rubbish which has accumulated during the years of the Republic must be removed." The newly created Fatherland Front was meanwhile also spreading the Fascist idea.  

These measures were all fine and good, but both Mussolini and the Heimwehr were dissatisfied at the chancellor's halfhearted measures. Dollfuss was clearly dragging his feet in his move towards fascism. The tenor of the letter of July 22 makes this quite clear. The government was preparing the Austrian public for "corporate and authoritarian reforms." It was only ready to "proceed with the organization on a corporate basis of the various branches of the Austrian export industry," and it was only considering

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25Dollfuss to Mussolini, July 22, 1933, Braunthal, The Tragedy of Austria, p. 188.
measures to break the Socialist grip on Vienna. The slow walk of Vienna towards fascism did not match the "gallop at which Rome wanted to proceed."

To hurry Dollfuss along in his policy of organizing Austria along fascist lines, Mussolini invited Dollfuss to visit him again. On August 19 and 20, 1933, the two met at Riccione, where Mussolini, with his family around him, entertained Dollfuss in an atmosphere of cordiality. Two written records of this meeting are available and show quite clearly the range of topics which were discussed at Riccione. The first document, probably written by Mussolini, contained a definite set of proposals which Mussolini wanted Dollfuss to carry through. The second document was a memorandum written by Dollfuss which was a record of the meeting.

The first document, in which Mussolini defined a number of sweeping reforms which he wanted Dollfuss to put into practice, is of such importance to our discussion of the demise of Austrian democracy that a somewhat lengthy quotation is justified. Of particular significance are the first two paragraphs, which read as follows:

26 Ibid., pp. 188-191.
27 Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, p. 203.
1. This third trip to Italy—more unexpected and more sensational than the previous ones—must not be left in their present static condition, but must signalise the beginning of a new course in Austrian domestic and foreign policy. Otherwise the trip will have been pointless and therefore harmful.

2. Upon his return to Vienna, Dollfuss must announce an important political speech for early September—that is, on the evening before the announced putsch. This speech must precede a series of actions of a kind which will stir up and arouse the Austrians from their depressed morale. To be explicit:
   (a) Immediate strengthening of the Government by bringing in new elements (Steidle,28 Starhemberg) who will take away from the present Government its character of being composed simply of a residue from the old regime.
   (b) Fusion of all forces and of all fronts into a single national front with the motto: the independence of Austria and the renovation of Austria.
   (c) Pronounced dictatorial character of the Government.
   (d) Government commissioner for the city of Vienna.
   (e) Propaganda on a large scale.29

The remainder of the Italian memorandum was an outline of the topics the chancellor was to discuss in his September speech. Dollfuss seems readily to have assented to these proposals by Mussolini, although some difference of opinion did develop over the tempo at which these reforms were to be carried out and over the growing participation of the Heimwehr in Dollfuss' government. Mussolini wanted to see

28 Leader of the Tyrolese Heimwehr.
29 Note to Federal Chancellor Dr. Dollfuss for his consideration. Quoted in Braunthal, The Tragedy of Austria, pp. 192-193.
Austria completely remolded, and his method of accomplishing this was to strengthen the influence of the Heimwehr. When speaking of the putsch the Duce obviously had in mind the complete liquidation of the Social Democrats in their Vienna stronghold. The government was to take control of the city, confiscate its funds, and oust all Socialist leaders from their positions of power. All of this was to be carried out by force if necessary.\textsuperscript{30}

Dollfuss was, however, not yet willing to carry out these reforms. The first requirement, that of strengthening the participation of the Heimwehr in the government, was delayed for the time being. The Austrian memorandum on the Riccione meeting commented on this retrospectively by stating that "the Federal Chancellor, however, succeeded in evading this attempt."\textsuperscript{31} The second requirement, the appointment of a commissar for Vienna, was also delayed. Dollfuss did not fulfill this promise until six months later after the Socialists had been suppressed in February. Mussolini's suggestion that Dollfuss deliver a major programmatic speech was readily fulfilled by the chancellor since it fitted in with his own plans. The result was the famous address at the Trabrennplatz in Vienna on September 11 in


\textsuperscript{31}Dollfuss' Amtserinnerung, quoted in Braunthal, The Tragedy of Austria, p. 194.
which Dollfuss wrote off the parliamentary system and proclaimed a "Christian and authoritarian" state rather than a fascist and dictatorial one. Dollfuss was still not ready to suppress the Social Democrats, and in his memorandum he did not even mention that this had been discussed at Riccione. Thus, on the entire issue of domestic policy Dollfuss stood his ground and showed that he was not yet Mussolini's tool.

Mussolini and the Heimwehr were not at all satisfied with the way the Riccione conference had turned out. Starhemberg particularly was displeased with the chancellor's reluctance to install additional Heimwehr men in governmental positions and to carry out a coup against the Socialists. To hurry Dollfuss along the road to fascism, Starhemberg visited Mussolini on September 1, 1933, and persuaded the Duce again to use his influence to speed the stubborn Dollfuss along the desired path.

On September 9, Mussolini wrote Dollfuss another letter in which he stated that he shared Starhemberg's misgivings. He exhorted Dollfuss to continue in a "decisive

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32 Brook-Shepherd, *Prelude to Infamy*, pp. 203-204.
34 Brook-Shepherd, *Prelude to Infamy*, p. 207.
fashion along the road to Fascism." In order to win over more of the Nazi malcontents to its cause, he advised the Austrian chancellor that the state would have to show a considerably more "intensive and decisive activity" for its renovation. The salvation of the state, Mussolini went on, could "never be achieved by coalitions parliamentary in character, but only by an organised defence, which bases itself on the youth and rallies around a new idea."

Mussolini was also disturbed by the presence in Dollfuss' midst of certain elements "like Winkler and Schumy, who are not thought to have the will or intention to bring the country out of the morass of liberalism and democracy. . . . Your Excellency's worthy efforts and great passion for the remoulding of the Austrian are being neutralised by the fact that men who never can be expected to give honest support to your aims continue to occupy political positions of the first importance."35

Mussolini concluded by referring to Dollfuss' upcoming speech on September 11: "I should like to believe that the speech which you are to deliver on the eleventh of this month will succeed in giving a more decisive and more spirited tone to the Austrian policy of renovation,

35Mussolini to Dollfuss, September 9, 1933, Braunthal, The Tragedy of Austria, p. 195.
and in the expectation of learning what will be the further
development of events in Austria, which I follow with the
greatest interest, I extend to you expressions of cordial
friendship."36

On September 11 Dollfuss delivered his expected speech
on the renovation of Austria. In this speech—probably
the most important one in his life—Dollfuss announced the
"effacement of the parties, the overcoming of the party
state . . . and the formation of a new corporate constitu-
tion."37 He indicated the new ideology of the Fatherland
Front and the outlines of the emerging corporate state.
Although Dollfuss did not fully follow Mussolini's pro-
posals in that he announced the creation of a Christian,
authoritarian state instead of a fascist, dictatorial, one,
he did deal an irretrievable death blow to the parliamentary
system and to the Socialist efforts to revive their fortunes
under that system.38

The pertinent part of the speech dealing with the end
of parliamentary democracy reads as follows:

36Ibid., p. 196.


38Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, p. 111.
I do not want to list in detail all the sins committed in our parliament and so-called democracy. Those who regret the turn which events have now taken should examine the faults they have committed and then they will understand the developments of our time. ... Parliament has cut itself out; it has gone to ruin on its own demagogy and formalism. And this parliament—such a representation and such a leadership of the people—will never and ought never to come back again.39

In the above speech the chancellor made it clear that a return to the democratic form of government was unthinkable and that the Social Democrats were to be permanently excluded from power. But, as has been pointed out, Dollfuss did not intend completely to follow the dictates of Mussolini. In Dollfuss' speech the word "fascism" itself was avoided and the high sounding phrase "Social Christian German State of Austria with a corporate basis" was used instead, indicating quite clearly that the new state was to have a decisive Catholic texture.

In other words, Dollfuss wanted to do things in his own way. He resented the Heimwehr appeals over his own head to Mussolini, and he also felt that the Italian leader had unnecessarily prodded him in his letter of September 9. To show that this type of pressure was somewhat resented, Dollfuss sent his special agent, Herr Schüller, to Rome to voice his disapproval. After his visit with Mussolini on

September 15, Schüller reported back to Dollfuss that the message had gotten across to Mussolini. Similarly, the tone of Dollfuss' letter to Mussolini on September 22, in which he replied to the latter's letter of September 9, also made it quite clear that Dollfuss was still not Mussolini's henchman and that he was determined to put into action his program announced on September 11 "energetically and with especial regard for Austrian conditions."

Dollfuss was, however, too dependent on Italy's support to disregard Mussolini's admonishments altogether. The cabinet reshuffle of September 21 was a partial fulfillment of Mussolini's requests. The reorganization of the cabinet also corresponded with Dollfuss' own intentions in that he was able substantially to increase his own power at the same time. Winkler and Schumy, the Landbund leaders, were dropped from the cabinet, as was Vaugoin, the leader of the Christian Social Party. But, contrary to Mussolini's expectations, the Heimwehr element in the government was not substantially strengthened. Fey replaced Winkler as vice-chancellor and was thus removed from the powerful position of minister of public security. Also Schönburg- Hartenstein,

40Schüller to Dollfuss, September 15, 1933, Braunthal, The Tragedy of Austria, pp. 196-198.

41Dollfuss to Mussolini, September 22, 1933, ibid., pp. 198-199.
a Heimwehr adherent, was given the position of state secretary of defense. Dollfuss himself emerged stronger than ever and retained the portfolios of foreign affairs, national defense, public security, and agriculture, as well as the chancellorship.42

The cabinet shake-up of September 21 represented a significant move in the direction of authoritarian rule in that it removed a strong democratic element, the Landbund, from all important governmental positions. This agrarian organization, under the leadership of Franz Winkler, had long been opposed to the heavy influence of the Heimwehr. Open enmity had existed between the two groups almost from the beginning of Dollfuss' government, and as pressure from Italy and the Heimwehr increased, Dollfuss found himself unable to resist their demands to drop the Landbund leaders from his cabinet. After the Landbund had been excluded from the government, Dollfuss made repeated attempts to heal the breach between the Landbund and Heimwehr, but failed each time. With the expulsion of the former in September, the Landbund found itself permanently excluded from its previous position.43


43Ibid., p. 459; Winkler, Die Diktatur in Österreich, pp. 79-82.
During the period between the cabinet reshuffle of September 21, 1933, and the outbreak of hostilities on February 12, 1934, the government took measures to come to a final showdown with the Social Democrats. Due to a tremendous upsurge of Nazi outrages, Fey was handed the portfolios of defense and public security on January 11, 1934, to coordinate the actions of the Austrian army, Heimwehr, and police, and, thus, offer a united front against the Nazis. Fey felt, as did Mussolini, that the only way the National Socialists could be dealt with effectively was, first of all, to eliminate the Social Democrats as a factor in Austrian politics. With all of the armed forces under his control, Fey would have virtually a free hand to carry out his will.

Before entrusting Fey with the all-powerful ministries of defense and public security, Dollfuss made several attempts to reach agreements with both the Socialists and the Nazis. He realized that once Fey and his Heimwehr associates controlled the police and the army he would be able to do little to stop the conflagration between the two opposing forces. If Dollfuss were able to come to terms with the Socialist leaders, he might be able to drop the

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Heimwehr leaders from his midst and, together with the Socialists, might be in a position to thwart the Nazi designs on his country. Similarly, an agreement with the National Socialists might also save Austria from much bloodshed and violence. But an understanding with the Socialists was precluded because of the vast ideological differences separating the two camps, and agreement with the National Socialists was ruled out almost from the beginning because of their demand for Anschluss.

Dollfuss' attempts at reconciliation with the Socialists began on December 22, 1933, when Dollfuss sent a secret emissary Emmerich Czermak to negotiate with Karl Renner about the possibility of a rapprochement with the moderate Socialists. Renner proposed that Austria be governed by a legislative council of state in which the Christian Socials were to be assured a majority.45 This offer was not acceptable to the chancellor. Dollfuss simply could not bear going back to parliamentary rule now that he was so far along in his program of renovating Austria along authoritarian lines. He might have accepted this proposal nine months before. Now it was too late. After giving it serious thought he turned it down. As he told Czermack, "It's just

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not possible to give Austrian politics that sort of twist any more, It's too late."\textsuperscript{46}

Contact was again made between Dollfuss and Socialist leaders on New Year's Eve, 1933. They met in the ministry for social affairs to discuss the problem of how the Socialist trade unions were to be fitted into Dollfuss' new system of government. The administration offered the trade unions one-third of the seats in the new labor administration commission, and, although this seems to have been quite a reasonable arrangement, the Socialist leaders vetoed it in the last minute. The meeting, which had met in very favorable atmosphere, broke up in an air of dissatisfaction and recrimination. No group so promising was ever to meet again.\textsuperscript{47}

On January 18 Dollfuss came out with a public plea for cooperation with the Socialist leadership. The Austrian workers, Dollfuss said, "must seriously consider whether it is not also their duty to work together, out of inner conviction, with the new system." Once the knowledge of the necessity of working together has become known in the widest circles, then "I hope that, in the immediate future, new possibilities will present themselves for the

\textsuperscript{46}Quoted in Brook-Shepherd, \textit{Prelude to Infamy}, p. 114.

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., pp. 114-115.
incorporation of those who hitherto stood aside into the front of the defenders of Austrian independence and the rebirth of Austria which this will bring." Dollfuss intended these words for the moderate Socialist leaders who were at this time in open conflict with the radical and predominately Jewish leaders. A meeting of Socialist Party members was to have convened to discuss the chancellor's offer, but it was cancelled partly in protest to an untimely circulation ban of the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, the party newspaper.  

The rejection of Dollfuss' appeal on January 18 still did not convince him that a truce was impossible. His next feeler went out to the Socialist mayor of Vienna, Carl Seitz. This time the chancellor's secret envoy was Friedrich Funder, an eminent journalist and city councillor. Funder's contacts with Seitz lasted until January 25 and were just about to reach a constructive stage when a large dump of *Schutz bund* explosives was unearthed, including plans which suggested that violence was imminent. Upon this Dollfuss broke off negotiations, feeling more disillusioned.

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than ever about prospects for cooperation. Dollfuss made one last effort before resigning himself to the view held by him and his advisers that the left wing was still dominated by the radicals and did not want to negotiate. This time his feeler went out to the moderate Socialist deputies of the Lower Austrian diet. Dollfuss' spokesman was Karl Karwinsky, his under secretary of state. The Socialist spokesman was a moderate provincial deputy, Heinrich Schneidmadl, who was a friend of Karwinsky. Karwinsky was authorized to offer complete independence to the trade unions within the Fatherland Front if class warfare were renounced. Although Schneidmadl expressed a personal willingness to discuss this proposal, the Viennese party leaders would not agree to this plan and vetoed it.

The failure of Dollfuss' efforts to reach an agreement with the Austrian Socialists weakened his position.

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51 Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, pp. 117-118.

52 The question has been raised whether a reconciliation between the Dollfuss regime and the Socialists was actually possible. Julius Braunthal, Socialist historian, says that it was not. According to him, the deeper reason for the crisis "was an ideological antagonism which could have been resolved only if the Social Democrats had ceased to remain true to their principles and had relinquished the essence of their aims." See Braunthal, The Tragedy of Austria, p. 8. Kurt von Schuschnigg, Dollfuss' successor, also believes in this interpretation. See, Kurt von Schuschnigg, Ein Requiem in Rot-Weiss-Rot (Zürich: Verlag Amstutz, Herdeg, and Company, 1946), pp. 198-199.
considerably and led to an even greater assumption of power by the Heimwehr and a corresponding rise in Italian influence. Both the Heimwehr leaders and Mussolini were disturbed by Dollfuss' increasingly independent attitude, and the prospect of a Dollfuss-Socialist reconciliation frightened them into action. Both, therefore, attempted to apply even greater pressure on Dollfuss, the Heimwehr by setting out on a more independent course of action which included negotiations with the Nazis that threatened to remove Dollfuss from the scene altogether, and Mussolini by sending his under secretary for foreign affairs Fulvio Suvich to Austria on January 18 to call Dollfuss to task.53

Before Suvich arrived Dollfuss made one last effort to keep from becoming the complete prisoner of the Heimwehr and Italy. He knew that he would be under severe pressure once Suvich arrived since the demands that Mussolini had made at the Riccione conference had not yet been fulfilled. The Social Democrats had not been crushed, and an agreement with Hungary was yet to be concluded. To place himself in a better bargaining position with Suvich, Dollfuss hoped to be able to conclude an agreement with the Nazis. The chance for this was slim since the Nazis were almost assuredly going to include in any conditions for agreement

53 Jedlicka, Ein Heer im Schatten der Parteien, pp. 111-112.
a demand for Austria's incorporation into the German Reich—a condition which Dollfuss would not meet. But he was still determined to try to reach an understanding with them.

It should perhaps be noted that Dollfuss had made previous attempts to form an alliance with the National Socialists once in May, 1933, and again in October of the same year. Both times he was unsuccessful; he was therefore under no illusion as to either the aims or methods of the party.

Ever since Hitler's rise to power in January, 1933, the Austrian National Socialists were engaged in a systematic campaign to bring about the incorporation of Austria into Germany. To achieve this aim, propaganda, agitation, and violence were used on an unprecedented scale. The high

54Gehl, *Austria, Germany, and the Anschluss*, p. 75.
57Hitler made it clear very early in his career that one of the main objectives of German foreign policy was union with Austria. See Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Miflin Company, 1943), p. 3.
point of Nazi activity was reached in May and June, 1933, and it was then that Dollfuss first tried to reach agreement with the Nazis. This attempt was, however, unsuccessful. After that Dollfuss decided to meet fire with fire. Stiff jail sentences were handed out, the carrying of arms was forbidden, Nazi insignias and Nazi songs were prohibited, and, on June 19, 1933, the Nazi Party was outlawed.  

After the Nazi Party was made illegal in June, 1933, relations between the two German powers were extremely strained. The failure of the Austrian chancellor to reach an agreement with Germany suggested that an understanding between them was now no longer possible. Suvich's pending visit in January, 1934, persuaded Dollfuss to make one last desperate attempt at a rapprochement with the National Socialists. Through his minister in Germany, Stephan Tauschitz, Dollfuss proposed discussions with Theodor Habicht, the leader of the Austrian National Socialists. The Austrian chancellor insisted that the interview be requested by Habicht and that the latter should have Hitler's authorization to conclude a settlement. Hitler gave his consent, and plans were drawn up for a meeting to be held some time in January.  

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60 Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluss, pp. 74-77.
The negotiations between Dollfuss and Habicht were set for January 8 and were to be held in secrecy. However, just before the meeting took place, word of it leaked out to the Heimwehr leaders, who were strongly opposed to the plan. They immediately held a conference with Dollfuss on the night of January 7 and voiced their disapproval. Starhemberg told Dollfuss "that their ways would lie apart if he really held a discussion with Habicht."\(^6^1\) Fey threatened to arrest the whole group if the interview was held. Mussolini also strongly protested the meeting since he had everything to lose if an agreement was concluded with Habicht. Under such circumstances, Dollfuss was no longer master of the situation and the meeting with Habicht was called off.\(^6^2\)

When Suvich made his expected visit to Vienna on January 18, Dollfuss' position was thus considerably weakened, and the Italian emissary was now able to attain the promise of fulfillment of a number of important demands. While in Vienna, Suvich pressed Dollfuss for the immediate liquidation of the Social Democrats by force. Dollfuss was given to understand that if the Socialists were not crushed soon the Italians would abandon him. Suvich also urged the Austrian chancellor to continue his plans to

\(^{61}\)Starhemberg, *Between Hitler and Mussolini*, pp. 117-118.

organize Austria on an authoritarian basis and even encouraged Fey to regard himself as the future chancellor if he took an active part in the suppression of the Socialists.  

With this promise in the back of his mind and with the knowledge that he had Italian support, Fey became engaged in a policy of more positive action. On January 31 Heimwehr units seized the provincial government buildings at Innsbruck, ousted the provincial officials, and reorganized the government of the Tyrol to suit their own ends. Occurrences of a similar nature took place in Upper Austria on February 6, in Styria and Burgenland on February 7, and in Lower Austria and Salzburg on February 9. Social Democratic leaders were arrested, their headquarters were raided, and illegal arms of the outlawed Schutzbund were seized. Fey took advantage of the discovery of these weapons to announce that a "Bolshevist plot" was in the making. On February 10 the Vienna police were removed from the jurisdiction of mayor Karl Seitz and placed under a commissioner of security directly responsible to Fey.

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63 Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, pp. 126-128. For Suvich's report to Mussolini on the meeting, see Suvich to Dollfuss, January 26, 1934, Braunthal, The Tragedy of Austria, pp. 199-201.

64 Sweet, "An Episode in Fascist Diplomacy," p. 177.
On February 11, after a conference with Dollfuss two days before, Fey was able to announce in a speech before the Vienna Heimwehr: "The discussions of yesterday and the day before have given us the certainty that Chancellor Dr. Dollfuss is ours. I can tell you even more, even if only briefly: tomorrow we shall go to work, and we shall make a thorough job of it."

Fey's speech of February 11 leaves little doubt that Dollfuss was now a prisoner of the Heimwehr. A speech of even greater significance was one delivered by Prince Starhemberg on February 4, at Innsbruck, which clearly points to an impending civil war. It reads:

The Nazis would never have come to power in Germany if the economy had not been in such a devastated state. We are not posing as the defenders of democracy. We can only fight Nazism by putting our economy in order. We are not to be duped to defend the Social Democrats.

We want to reconstruct the state in the manner prescribed by Dollfuss on September 11, 1933.—We are fighting for Austria's freedom.—We are finally on the verge of seeing these goals realized. Even though the parties have not yet been dissolved we shall soon work towards this objective as long as the Chancellor's version is made clear.

We do not care under which lid the democrats are hiding. We are fighting democratic corruption wherever we find it. I say, therefore, let us make

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65Quoted in Gulick, Austria from Habsburg to Hitler, Vol. II, p. 1265. The German text of this statement can be found in Winkler, Die Diktatur in Österreich, p. 97.
order and the Nazi movement will collapse. How can this be accomplished with the red Social Democrats controlling Vienna and sitting in the other provinces? How can the people believe in reconstruction when Vienna is ruled by the Bolsheviks? None of us doubts that the chancellor is the right man, but many of us, including me, despair at seeing the Chancellor's program sabotaged from day to day.

The above speech makes it quite explicit that the Heimwehr leaders were determined to follow a course which would lead to the destruction of the Social Democrats. Violence erupted as expected on the morning of February 12. At 7 A.M. on that morning two policemen of a force searching for hidden arms at the Schutzbund headquarters in Linz were shot down by the Socialist garrison under the leadership of Richard Bernaschek.

The stand taken by Bernaschek and his men on that fateful morning initiated a bloody civil war which lasted for several days and ended with the destruction of the Social Democratic Party as a political force in Austrian politics.

With Bernaschek's defiant stand, the Vienna leadership was reluctantly pulled into the fray and was forced to call for a general strike at about midday of the 12th. From the beginning the struggle was doomed to failure since

only about 20,000 Socialist workers out of a total of approximately 1,500,000 took part in the strike. The Schutzbund, which numbered about 60,000 at the outbreak of the war, was somewhat outnumbered by the government forces which, together with the regular army, the police, and the Heimatschutz stood at about 85,000. But more important than this was the government's great preponderance of fire power. This is not to say that the Socialist cause was completely helpless, but due to the government's quick and decisive action, which included the use of artillery, the rebellious forces were soon demoralized and defeated. When the fighting ended on February 16, 239 men had lost their lives and 718 had been wounded. The Social Democratic

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67 This is the figure reported by the American ambassador to Austria, George H. Earle to the Secretary of State Cordell Hull. See Earle to Secretary of State, Vienna, March 2, 1934, in Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1934, Vol. I (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1951), p. 22.

68 Brook-Shepherd, Prelude to Infamy, pp. 132-133. According to Rudolf Schlesinger, this is an overestimation. He places the number of forces available to the government at 50,000 and to the Socialists at 40,000. See Rudolf Schlesinger, Central European Democracy and its Background (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 344.

69 This is the official number announced by the government. See Braunthal, The Tragedy of Austria, p. 101.
Party was dissolved, its leaders were banned or imprisoned, its funds were confiscated, and its trade unions were abolished. Austrian Social Democracy had come to an end, and the door was open to complete authoritarian rule.\footnote{For other accounts of the civil war of February 12, 1934, see Wilhelm Böhm, "Februar 1934," Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur, Vol. II (1958), pp. 66-77; Ingrid Adam, "Zum 12. Februar 1934," Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur, Vol. VIII (January, 1964), pp. 1-8; and Otto Bauer, Der Februar Aufstand der österreichischen Arbeiter: seine Ursachen und seine Wirkungen (Prague: Verlag der deutschen sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik, 1934).}

It is doubtful whether Dollfuss' position was in the long run strengthened either internally or abroad after the suppression of the Socialists. The real victors of the civil war seem to have been neither the regime nor the Heimwehr, but rather the Nazis. After the revolt the ranks of the Nazis were swelled by disenchanted Social Democrats. The National Socialists even aided the Schutzbund leaders to escape from Upper Austria into Germany. What it meant was that there were now two illegal parties working for the overthrow of the government, both of which received their inspiration and support from abroad.\footnote{Jedlicka, "Die Österreichische Innenpolitik, 1934-1955," pp. 250-251.} According to Karl Renner, who maintained this view, "the workers turned away in resignation from their own State and came to the conclusion that if Fascism was unavoidable, the anti-Clerical
variety of the Germans was preferable to that oriented towards Italy and the Catholic Church."72

However, Dollfuss' position vis-a-vis the Heimwehr was now also gravely threatened, especially in regard to Fey, who now had ambitions to replace Dollfuss as chancellor. Indeed, Fey's popularity reached an all time high immediately after the Socialists were put down. Everywhere he was hailed as the man who had saved Austria from the "Bolshevik" menace. There was even talk of a Hitler-Fey conference, which forced Dollfuss to take Fey seriously, and it was only with Starhemberg's support that he was able to put Fey in his place.

In a meeting on March 6 between Dollfuss and the radical Heimwehr leaders, which included Fey and Neustädter-Stürmer, a discussion was held on the integration of the Heimwehr into the government forces. Fey and the radical wing were naturally opposed to any integration, since it would remove their base of power and make the idea of taking over the government an impossible one. Starhemberg, who was at this time the leader of the Heimwehr army, came out strongly for the government's position by declaring: "There's no argument about it. The Heimwehr is part of the Fatherland Front. Stories that we want to rule the country by ourselves are

just nonsense, a nonsense believed by a few misguided careerists and then spread by stupid or wilful rumour-mongers. In my view, all the fighting forces should be unified and an agreement should be drawn up to this effect.\footnote{Quote in Brook-Shepherd, \textit{Prelude to Infamy}, pp. 152-153.}

For the time being at least, this statement forced Fey to forget any designs which he may have had, and he was, in fact, never again able to regain the position of predominance which he enjoyed immediately after the civil war. On May 1, 1934, he was shorn of part of his power by being forced to relinquish the vice-chancellorship to Starhemberg, and on July 11 he handed over his post of minister of public security to Dollfuss and received instead the position of special commissioner in charge of emergency measures in defense of the state.\footnote{Toynbee, \textit{Survey of International Affairs}, 1934, p. 464.}

Austria's position abroad also became weakened after the civil war. Public opinion in France and England condemned the liquidation of the Socialist Party, and the English and French governments were now no longer as willing to support Austria in the League of Nations as they had previously been. With England and Italy opposed to League involvement, the issue was never brought up. An alternate
procedure was proposed by Italy and agreed to by France and England, and a joint declaration was issued on February 17, 1934, in which the three governments declared that they "take a common view as to the necessity of maintaining Austria's independence and integrity in accordance with the relevant treaties." But the declaration was ineffective and did nothing to sway Germany from her course. As John Simon, the English Foreign Minister declared: "The statement was one of general principles" and "it was specifically limited by saying, 'In accordance with the relevant treaties.'"

The unwillingness of the Western Powers to involve themselves intimately with the Austro-German question drove Dollfuss once again more tightly into the Italian-Hungarian orbit. Italy naturally wanted to see her political domination over Austria and Hungary continued and also desired to establish closer economic ties with them. Dollfuss could hardly be opposed to developing closer economic ties with Hungary and Italy, although he wished to avoid far-reaching political undertakings. At any rate, the natural outcome of Italy's efforts for closer economic ties with Austria and

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76 Quoted in Gehl, Austria, Germany, and the Anschluss, p. 83.
Hungary were the Rome Protocols of March 17, 1934, which were actually more important politically than economically. The aim of the protocols was to develop a "mutually agreed policy which shall be directed towards effective collaboration between European states and particularly between Italy, Austria, and Hungary. To this end, the three Governments will proceed to common consultation each time that at least one of them may consider this course opportune."77

Feeling himself considerably strengthened abroad, Dollfuss next took steps to consolidate his position within Austria. This he hoped to do by completing Austria's reorganization along authoritarian lines. The final step towards this objective was to be Austria's new constitution of May 1, 1934. The "May Constitution" received its inspiration from the papal encyclical Quadragesimo Anno issued by Pius XI in 1931. It was loosely modeled along the lines of Italian fascism. With the promulgation of this constitution, Austria was officially converted from a democratic republic into an authoritarian state. The constitution of May 1, 1934, represented the last step in the destruction of Austrian democracy.

77Protocols signed by Austria, Hungary, and Italy, in Rome, March 17, 1934, in Documents on International Affairs, 1933, p. 396.
The form which the Austrian state now took was stated in the preamble, which reads: "In the name of the Omni-
potent God from whom all law emanates, the Austrian people receives the present constitution for its state, which is federal, Christian, and German, and is based on corporativ-
ism." The purpose of the new constitution, which formally transformed Austria into an authoritarian state, was to give her unity and protection and guard her from those who were openly working for her destruction.

The authoritarian character of the new state was clearly shown by the way in which the legislature was set up. The legislative branch of the government consisted of four deliberative bodies and one body which could reject or accept legislation. The four advisory organs, which had purely advisory functions, were the council of state, the federal council of culture, the federal economic council, and the council of provinces. These four bodies were only consultative in nature. Their duties were limited to simply making comments on laws passed on to them by the government. Out of their own ranks they elected the 59 members of the federal diet, which could accept or reject

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measures drawn up by the government. The government initiated all legislation and could also rule by government decree whenever it saw fit. The chancellor was, therefore, made virtual dictator, since his will in the long run could always be made to prevail.\(^7^9\)

As regards the corporative structure of the state, Austrian society was now organized along occupational rather than class lines. The seven occupational groupings into which Austrian society was now being reshuffled consisted of the following: agricultural and forestry; industry and mining; crafts; trade and communications; banking, credit, and insurance; the free professions; and finally, civil servants. In organizing Austria on a corporative basis, Dollfuss was clearly influenced by the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. The encyclical stressed that "social harmony could best be restored by the re-establishment of vocational groups which could replace the social classes based on opposing parties in the market economy and would enable employees to collaborate in economic production and in the creation of social conditions conducive

to the common good."\(^{80}\)

The corporate state that the May Constitution envisioned and the classless society it attempted to create were never realized. With the publication of the new constitution, Dollfuss wanted to push back the clock a hundred years or more and wished to create a society in which everyone had a fixed status in society—a society in which strife and turmoil would be at a minimum. As one might have expected, the provisions in the constitution calling for the establishment of the corporations were never fulfilled. Only two of the corporate bodies were actually organized; agriculture and forestry, and the civil servants. The other five remained in their infant stages throughout the Dollfuss and Schuschnigg regimes. All in all, the attempt to organize Austria on a corporative basis remained an utopian ideal which was never realized.\(^{81}\)


In turning Austria into a Christian corporate state Dollfuss had more in mind than to simply put into practice authoritarian, Christian Social, or even Catholic principles. Dollfuss' main purpose in the May Constitution, indeed, the purpose of his entire reign, was to create a national consciousness in Austria. Both Dollfuss and his successor, Kurt von Schuschnigg, wanted to re-establish "Austrian ideas" and Austrian "national values," which included Christian, authoritarian, and corporative principles. The establishment of an authoritative regime was more than merely the effort of a selfish group to obtain power. It represented rather an attempt to "establish a new moral order, a new hierarchy of values and purposes for the Austrian state." It was a self-conscious endeavor to nationalize Austria and to make of Austria a "national community and to articulate the ideals and values of that community." Dollfuss wanted to create Austrian national values which were a combination of Christian, authoritarian, and corporative principles.

In other words, Dollfuss wished to create an ideology unique to the Austrian national character which could compete with the ideology of the National Socialists. He

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82 The speech in which Dollfuss outlined his new ideology was, of course, his famous Trabrennplatz speech of September 11, 1933. See Weber, Dollfuss an Österreich, pp. 19-45.

desired to enlist the Austrian people into a new cause—the cause of saving their country from extinction. He wanted to instil in his countrymen a sentiment which they had not known before—the sentiment of patriotism. He wished to imbue them with a new spirit of pride and devotion in their country and to inculcate in them the belief that Austria had the right to lead a free and separate existence. It was to attain this that Dollfuss labored so arduously during the two years of his chancellorship, and it was to gain this end that he ultimately gave his life.

Engelbert Dollfuss has gone down in history not simply as the man who destroyed Austrian democracy, but more as the man who became Hitler's first foreign victim. The two issues were inseparably entwined, for without the Nazi menace there would have been no need for authoritarian methods. At any rate, the struggle that Dollfuss waged against the Nazis during his years as chancellor came to an end for him on July 25, 1934, when he was murdered by a group of Austrian Nazis who had gained possession of the Chancellery at one o'clock on that day.

The July putsch was plotted by a number of high Austrian Nazi officials, including Habicht's Chief of Staff, Dr. Rudolf Weydenhammer, one of Habicht's lieutenants, a Dr. Wächter, and the leader of the SS Standard 89, Fridolin Glass. Also implicated in the plot were the Austrian
ambassador to Rome, Dr. Anton Rintelen,\textsuperscript{84} and Emil Fey, whose actions throughout were highly suspect. The coup was probably carried out without Hitler's foreknowledge or permission,\textsuperscript{85} although he certainly would have accepted a fait accompli if the coup had succeeded.

At 1:00 P. M. on July 25, 154 members of the SS Standart 89, dressed in the uniforms of the regular Austrian army, drove up to the chancellery, were admitted without any difficulty, and occupied the whole building within minutes. A group of about fifteen Nazis captured the radio station and announced the resignation of the Dollfuss cabinet and the appointment of Rintelen as chancellor. The insurgents had hoped that the Austrian army would be won over to the prospective new government and to be able to carry out the putsch without any bloodshed by simply forcing the existing government to resign. The army remained loyal, and the putsch failed almost before it had begun.

Information of the putsch had leaked out to Fey, but he failed to pass on all he knew to Dollfuss and his ministers assembled at the chancellery on the afternoon of the

\textsuperscript{84}For Rintelen's account, see Anton Rintelen, Erinnerungen an Österreichs Weg (Munich: Verlag Bruckmann, 1941).

25th. Fey gave Dollfuss a general warning of a planned coup d'etat, but only when it was already too late. Fey undoubtedly wanted personally to be able to suppress the coup to regain his former prestige and power. But Fey's selfish aims in this case proved to be Dollfuss' undoing.

Upon receiving the belated news from Fey, the chancellor immediately ordered his cabinet to disperse. When the insurgents occupied the building they found only Dollfuss, Fey, and Karl Karwinsky, the state secretary of security. Most of the other cabinet members escaped capture and carried out the functions of government.

Schuschnigg was made provisional chancellor by President Miklas and was ordered to bring the situation under control. Meanwhile, Dollfuss, who was still at the chancellery, tried to escape through a side entrance but found the door locked. Finding this means of escape blocked, he and his attendant turned about in search of another exit but found a group of Nazi rebels blocking their way. Otto Planetta, the leader of this small band of rebels, rushed up to Dollfuss, and without saying a word, fired two shots at him at close range, which hit him in the neck and the armpit. Dollfuss fell and was left to bleed slowly to death on a sofa with neither his plea for a doctor nor priest being heeded by the assailants. Dollfuss' life slowly ebbed away
from him, and at about 3:45 P. M. the chancellor died.\textsuperscript{86} Although putsch was successfully put down, Dollfuss died believing that the government had been taken over by the Nazis. His successor, Kurt von Schuschnigg, valiantly carried on Dollfuss' work, but the National Socialists finally realized their dreams of a greater Germany when Austria was annexed on March 12, 1938.

The incorporation of Austria into Germany in March, 1938, brought to a close an era in Austrian history that was marked by much bitterness and strife. It was a chapter of Austrian history which began with the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy and ended with Austria's annexation twenty years later.

Perhaps the most dramatic, yet tragic, period of the twenty year history of the First Republic of Austria was the period ruled by Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss. It was an era dominated by personalities greater than Dollfuss—an era in which Dollfuss, nevertheless, left his mark. If Dollfuss is remembered for anything, he is remembered for the gallant, though losing battle, he fought to save his country from extinction. It was he who for the first time

tried to instill in the Austrian people a sentiment of loyalty and patriotism, who tried to bring them to the realization that their country was worth saving after all, that Austria did have the right to lead a separate existence from Germany.

In his fight to save Austria from her northern neighbor, Dollfuss found that the struggle could be waged much more effectively through the adoption of authoritarian methods. But authoritarian methods alone were not enough. Austria needed even more desperately a foreign power to protect her, since by herself she could never have withstood the Nazi onslaught. The search for security naturally led to an alliance with fascist Italy, since it was the only country then willing to come to the aid of Austria. Support from Italy was, however, contingent upon the destruction of the Social Democrats and the establishment of a type of government similar to that in Italy. It was, therefore, necessary to abandon the democratic system of government and to replace it with one both more effective and more favorable to Austria's patron, Mussolini.

In conclusion, it may be said that Austrian democracy failed for the following reasons: the long tradition of nondemocratic forces of the Austrian state and people; the material bankruptcy of the First Republic of Austria, which forced democracy to grow "on the soil of economic
impoverishment;" the absence of any consciousness of nationality among the Austrian people and leaders, which led to the belief that Austria's destiny was tied up with Germany's; the vast gulf separating the ideologies of Austria's two leading political parties; and finally, the unwillingness of the Western Powers to come to Austria's aid in her hour of greatest need, which forced the Austrians to rely on a fascist power.

It becomes clear, therefore, that democracy did not fail because of the attempt of one man to bring it to its end. Democracy failed because it was unable to meet the many challenges with which it was faced after the war. By March, 1933, the ineptness of the democratic system of government had become an established fact, and the authoritarian course which Austrian politics took thereafter simply represents the effort of one man to save his country with the only means available to him.

87Klemperer, "Chancellor Seipel and the Crisis of Democracy in Austria," p. 475.

88According to Schuschnigg, Austria's greatest weakness lay in the fact that it was impossible to "fuse Austria's state consciousness and her greater national consciousness into an effective, popular synthesis." See Schuschnigg, Ein Requiem in Rot-Weiss-Rot, p. 197.

89Paul R. Sweet claims that a democratic policy for Dollfuss was only possible if the Western Powers had backed him. See Paul R. Sweet, "Democracy and Counterrevolution in Austria," The Journal of Modern History, Vol. XXII (March, 1950), p. 57.
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