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By courtesy of "The Sunday Times" and with special consent of Sir Eric Phipps we have great pleasure in reprinting the article "The Problem of Austria," published in "The Sunday Times" on June 17, 1945.

The opinion of Sir Eric should be highly valued as it comes from a great authority on European problems.

We do hope that Sir Eric's suggestions will contribute to bringing about a just and fair treatment of Austria.

AUSTRIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION.

THE PROBLEM OF AUSTRIA

BY SIR ERIC PHIPPS.

H.M. Minister at Vienna, 1928-33

SINCE her liberation Austria has faded out of the news, yet her future is a matter that closely concerns all Europeans. The days are past when it could be said: ". . . tu felix Austria nube." Since 1938 she has not known happiness, but only humiliation, blood and tears. But then the union with Nazi Germany was not a marriage: it was merely the first Act of Hitler's monstrous drama—"The Rape of Europe."

Even Aristide Briand, that "pilgrim of peace," had himself years before rightly declared: "l'Anschluss c'est la guerre!": yet when it came as a climax to a prolonged period of Nazi terrorism in Austria, it failed to alarm British onlookers in the stalls. During the entr'acte before the attack on Czechoslovakia, they were heard to explain that the Austrians spoke German, were German, and mostly desired the Anschluss.

Nobody who has lived for any length of time in that fair and gracious land could entertain such illusions. Not only are the Austrians not Germans, but they differ from them fundamentally in almost every respect. Even the common language is more of a chasm than a bridge between them, so differently does it sound as

spoken in Vienna or in Berlin. As for the Anschluss, the number and category of its Austrian adherents varied with the varying fortunes of the different political parties in Germany. At no time could it have been said with certainty that a majority of Austrians favoured it.

Apart from the small pan-German group in Austria it was never love for Germany that inspired Austrians to favour the Anschluss, but a feeling, particularly in the difficult years just after the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, that life for them and their children would be easier if they formed part of a larger unit. This idea was, of course, always sedulously fostered by Germany during the whole period from 1918 to 1938, in which latter year most Austrian Nazis found to their cost that they had been duped by their big German "brothers."

AUSTRIA'S RECORD

NOW that Austria has been liberated the Austrian problem confronts us again, and it behoves us to consider what prospects she has of leading a contented independent existence. To estimate these prospects let us first examine briefly conditions in Austria between the "Umsturz" and 1938, and then consider what steps should be taken to ensure the prosperity of that lovely land situated in the heart of Europe, and containing incomparably more than its fair share of beauty, charm and genius, whether musical, artistic, or scientific.

Austria, after her terrible war and post-war sufferings, made remarkable progress in 1927, 1928, and the greater part of 1929, until the first effects of the world slump brought down the Boden Creditanstalt and, later on, the Creditanstalt. The improvement showed itself in foreign trade, in most branches of production, including agriculture, in railway traffic, in the growth of savings, in the cover of the currency and in many other ways. This improvement was therefore a real one and not a mere orgy of spending, such as accompanied the inflation boom in 1921 or the Stock Exchange boom which followed the stabilisation of the currency in 1923: nor can it be said that it was simply a result of the inflow of foreign credits. Until 1930 the Austrian Government had received no foreign loan since the League of Nations loan in 1923, which was exhausted by 1928, chiefly by the electrification of the railway system.

THE EVIL GENIUS

HOWEVER, even during those years of recovery and still more after the evil effects of the world slump had made themselves felt, interested German detractors of Austria were wont to quote her con-

siderable adverse balance of trade as a proof that she could never exist permanently as a self-supporting State. They deliberately ignored the unusually large part that services and invisible exports (*e.g.*, profits from the extensive tourist traffic) played in a free independent Austria. Furthermore they declared (so insistently that they converted many foreign well-wishers to their false thesis), that she would be ruined by the undue size of her capital.

As a matter of fact, the Province of Vienna often did better than several of the other provinces, and the proportion which unemployment and bankruptcies in Vienna bore to that of the whole country fell steadily for years. Moreover, it was Vienna that attracted so considerable a proportion of foreign visitors to Austria.

Prussia, and later on Germany, has always been the evil genius of Austria. Frederick the Great alternately attacked Maria Theresa and coaxed or bullied her into unprovoked aggression against Poland; Bismarck did the same in reverse order to Francis Joseph against Denmark over Schleswig-Holstein before attacking him in 1866: the German Government egged on Austria to attack Serbia in 1914: and then came Hitler.

We cannot yet assess all the loss and devastation, both material and spiritual, that Austria has suffered from the Nazis. Certain it is that Vienna has suffered grievously if only by the destruction of her beautiful Opera House and her Burg Theater — the Théâtre Français of Central Europe. If Piccadilly Circus may perhaps be regarded as the centre of London life, the Boulevards as that of Paris, and the Puerta del Sol as that of Madrid, the Opera was undoubtedly the centre of life in Vienna. People of all classes met there when Austria was still free, and listened intently in that great traditional Temple of Music to the masterpieces of Austrian and other composers. Indeed, the poorer Viennese, in the grim days of 1918 and after, often went without dinner in order to be able to pay for their opera ticket. Nor did the cinema ever reduce the number of worshippers at the nobler shrine.

To one who knew it in the gay flurry of its Imperial days, as well as in the more sombre times between the two German world-wars, when much of its glamour—but not all—was spent, Vienna stands out as the capital of musical, dramatic and scientific civilisation. As such it aroused jealousy of the German Nibelungen, whose great wish was to humiliate and degrade the city, the beauty, brilliance and “chic” of which threw all German towns into the shade, and made them seem “one-horse” and provincial in comparison. “Es giebt nur eine Kaiserstadt, es giebt nur ein Wien!” Its wonderful theatres and acting, its incomparable scientific and medical institutions, its lovely buildings, both ancient and modern, its magnificent Prater, with its eight rows of chestnut trees leading to the racecourse of the Freudenau, can

only be mentioned in passing. Its haunting charm, so impossible to describe, is equally impossible for any of its true friends to evade or to forget. Its very name recalls great music played in a perfect setting and that lighter music "à faire danser les cadavres" composed by the incomparable Strauss dynasty.

Most of this the Nazis succeeded in destroying, and they changed the very name of Austria and the atmosphere of Vienna. All this it is the duty no less than the interest of the civilised world to restore. It has been shown that Austria can live as an independent State, but the United Nations must help to set her on her feet again after the harm inflicted by Germany. We must all contribute to this essential work.

DANUBIAN UNITY

THE neighbouring States were none too friendly to Austria in the years between the two German world wars. Perhaps some kind of Danubian Customs Union might eventually be set up. Failing that, it is to be hoped that her neighbours may now prove more helpful by granting her economic assistance in the form of unilateral preferences. The contribution of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, and possibly of other foreign Governments, in that event might be to waive their Treaty rights under the most-favoured-nation clause as regards Austria.

Finally, it would seem highly desirable for all concerned to establish in Vienna the future World Security Organisation. No "cadre" could be more appropriate, agreeable or better suited to the needs of such a body. Vienna is the most central of the great European capitals, and has superb public buildings admirably adapted for the purpose. Nowhere else could this World Organisation hope to find a more congenial, friendly and civilising atmosphere, or one more calculated to inspire its members with a will to peace. Austria, on the other hand, would derive considerable benefit from the presence upon her territory of this large international body: after all her recent cruel and undeserved sufferings she would thus be helped to attain that measure of prosperity which is her due, and which it should be the privilege and honour of the United Nations to help her to regain.

Sir Walford Selby truly remarked that the independence of Austria was a major British interest. It may even be said that to ensure the independence and prosperity of Austria should be the sacred duty of the whole civilised world. Only thus will they be able to repay some part of their heavy debt of gratitude for her priceless contribution to the sum total of human achievement.