

LONDON-INFORMATION

OF THE AUSTRIAN SOCIALISTS IN GREAT BRITAIN

DER ÖSTERREICHISCHEN SOZIALISTEN IN ENGLAND

No. 3.

FEBRUARY 1st, 1946.

Single Copies: 4d.

UNRRA TO START IN AUSTRIA BEFORE MARCH

The Foreign Secretary, Mr. Bevin, informed the House of Commons recently that UNRRA would begin its work in Austria on March 1st. Replying to a question asked by *Peter Freeman* (Labour) Mr. Bevin said:

The Allied Council in Austria has formally requested UNRRA to assume responsibility for the import of relief and rehabilitation supplies into Austria. I understand that UNRRA is prepared to undertake this responsibility as from 1st March, but also **trying to get certain supplies to Austria before then.** My hon. Friend will appreciate that a date some time ahead has to be fixed for a change-over of responsibility of this kind if it is to be achieved without dislocation. Discussion as to the amount to be allocated to Austria by UNRRA is now going on in Washington. The resources of UNRRA are limited and a number of countries are dependent upon them, and allocation involves a difficult task.

Mr. Freeman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that recent reports from Austria state that, **out of 70 deaths, 65 are due to starvation, and could he bring pressure to bear on UNRRA to expedite their activities to prevent further deaths in that country?**

Mr. Bevin: I recognise that conditions in Austria are very bad. There are two things necessary in Austria—the speeding up of UNRRA distribution and, in addition, I have been pressing for a considerable time for a withdrawal of the large numbers of troops in that area.

Miss Jennie Lee: While appreciating what the Foreign Secretary has been

doing for the removal of troops, could he give us an assurance that from now, and during February, emergency measures will be taken to see that food arrives in Vienna and the desperate parts of Austria while UNRRA is getting under way?

Mr. Bevin: I will do my very best.

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EQUAL RATIONS FOR ALL AUSTRIANS PLANNED

In an interview, the Minister of Food, *Dr. Frenzel*, stated that his Ministry's primary task was the provision of food for this winter. A food plan would be drawn up based on the registration of food stocks in the country. Liaison of central and provincial authorities still left much room for improvement, but a radical change was expected. Home resources must be used before foreign help was requested. The food situation had been somewhat improved by barter agreements. Magnesium carbonate and other raw materials were to be sent to Czechoslovakia in exchange for sugar, artificial honey, potato and wheat flour and potatoes. Negotiations in progress with the Italian Trade Delegation should procure Italian fruit.

The Ministry intended to establish equal rations for the Austrian population soon.

Salzburg and Upper Austria were ready to help. Austria had to feed 250,000 Germans and Sudeten Germans. UNRRA assistance would be distributed by the Ministry which had created a special organisation for this purpose.

AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENT AND THE PRISONERS OF WAR

On January 16th the Parliament met for its first business session. A number of Government bills were submitted. First, however, various committees had to be elected since a bill is first discussed in committee before it comes up for a second and third reading in plenary session. There are 18 committees each composed of 13 to 27 members. Committee elections were unanimous, in accordance with an agreement between the parties.

This first plenary session devoted, however, most of its time to the urgent problem of Austria's prisoners of war. The Minister of the Interior submitted a report, which was confined to Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland only. According to this report, up to January 8th, 110,000 returning prisoners from the British, American and French zones had passed through Vienna, where they were fed, given discharge papers and sent to their homes in the Russian zone. Some more 50,000 men at present in British

and American hands are expected to return shortly.

From Russian camps 26,000 prisoners have so far returned. The Red Army has promised to return all Austrian prisoners of war as soon as possible. The arrival of further Russian transports may, therefore, be expected.

The Government hopes that the negotiations with the Allied Powers will take a quicker and more favourable turn once diplomatic relations are resumed. The Government is furthermore trying to arrange for the exchange of letters between prisoners of war and their relatives. By endeavouring to bring about a quicker release of Austrian prisoners of war the Government is not only fulfilling its duty; Austria needs just those people, mainly younger men, for reconstruction work. This is one of the most serious questions confronting the Government, and it will be solved with the help of the Allied council and all competent authorities.

AUSTRIA—NO SANCTUARY FOR WAR CRIMINALS

In an interview, the Minister of the Interior *Helmer* said: "Every war criminal, irrespective of his nationality, is to be handed over to the country in which he committed his crimes. It is not in Austria's interest that war criminals should find sanctuary in her territory. It lies in the supreme interests of the country that every form of Fascism of the various nations should be exterminated, since Austria herself does not tolerate any form of Fascism in her own country."

* * *

A second list of major war criminals has just been compiled in Vienna. It includes among others some well-known people, e.g.: Dr. Ing. Armin Dadiou, former Reichstatthalter of Styria; August von Schmid-Schmidfelden, Styrian industrialist; Dr. Schoeller, industrialist; Dr. Josef Auinger, Gestapo official. It is

too long a list to be published here in extenso. Forty per cent. of the war criminals named in that list are held by the Allies, ten per cent. by the Austrian authorities. Warrants for the arrest of the remainder have been issued.

CABINET COMMITTEE TO PURGE AUSTRIA

The Austrian Government has appointed a special Cabinet Committee consisting of the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor and four Ministers for the denazification of prominent posts in the Civil Service and in economic life. The purge will be carried out energetically in all Central State and Provincial Government departments, in banks, industries, insurance companies and chambers of commerce. In all Ministries, officials down to the third class will be examined and will have to give an account of their work and their attitude to the Nazi Party during the Hitler regime.

REMOVAL OF THE DEMARCATION LINES?

As it is well-known one of the major obstacles to Austria's economic recovery is the partition of the country in four zones, each of which was forced to develop its own economy since the free flow of goods was not possible. This abnormal, dangerous situation seems about to be improved in view of a decision of the Allied Council to facilitate the free exchange and transport of available surplus goods and service between the four zones. A further step in this direction is the imminent resumption of Danube shipping.

It is to be hoped that these measures will be taken in earnest and that no further artificial obstacles will delay the full use of Austria's economic resources, meagre though they are.

Transport—the Big Difficulty

The decision of the Allied Council was commented upon by the Minister of Transport, *Uebeleis*, who said: "The exchange of goods between the zones, and the resumption of shipping on the Danube, is of great importance.

"Our main difficulty is coal shortage.

"While the railway departments in Linz and Villach were able to maintain a restricted, but sufficient, traffic to meet the most urgent transport requirements, thanks to regular coal allocations, **Vienna and Lower Austria have been so short of coal that not even the most modest passenger traffic could be resumed.**

"Negotiations with other countries to barter coal against other goods are in progress but, so far, have yielded no result. The exchange of Bohemian lignite against Austrian iron ore had to be discontinued as, because of lack of coal, we were unable to meet our obligations. We are now trying to make available Austrian coal for civilian passenger traffic. To overcome the main difficulties, 75 locomotives were refitted for burning oil, but we are again short of oil.

"In these circumstances, shipping on the Danube is of particular importance. Preparations for its resumption within Austria were begun some time ago. The

resumption with neighbouring States is out of question for the time being.

"There are good prospects that Austria will receive lorries from UNRRA. This would be all the more important **since there is no civilian rail traffic in some parts of the country.**

"The Ministry of Transport is endeavouring to bring about an improvement in the situation in the next months."

But There Are No Ships!

The Director-General of the Austrian Donaudampfschiffahrtsgesellschaft (Danube Steamship Company) informed the American News Agency that the Company *still has no ships*. "This has had a catastrophic effect on the transport situation," he said. "All that the company can do is to await developments and be prepared to start work as soon as our fleet is returned to us."

THE RETURN OF AUSTRIAN REFUGEES

In the House of Commons the question of the return of Austrians to their country was raised by Professor *Savoury* who asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether his attention had been called to the announcement of General Mark Clark, issued at his headquarters in Vienna, that permits can now be granted to Austrian refugees in the U.S.A. to return to Austria; and whether he will arrange that similar permits should be available for Austrian anti-Nazi refugees in this country.

Mr. *John Hynd*, the Minister responsible for civilian affairs in Austria, in his reply, stated that arrangements have already been made for a certain number of Austrian refugees to return to Austria, and then said: "A scheme is being prepared to enable larger numbers to be repatriated, particularly those who will assist in the reconstruction of their country on democratic lines. Everything, however, depends on the availability of transport and an announcement will be made as soon as applications can be entertained."

VIENNA'S DIFFICULT RECONSTRUCTION WORK

Hans Riemer, Public Relations Officer of the Vienna Municipality, in a broadcast recently gave a vivid picture of the enormous difficulties the Vienna Municipality was confronted with after the liberation of the city and of the results achieved since then. He said:—

In the eight months since the liberation of Vienna, great efforts by the city authorities to restore vital municipal services and thus to revive life in Vienna had been successful. The chief concern of the authorities after liberation was to safeguard public health, which was seriously threatened by the number of corpses lying in the streets. Nearly 2,000 carcasses had to be removed and 5,000 human bodies buried. At the municipal abattoir at St. Marx, hundreds of slaughter animals which had starved to death had to be removed.

The Fight Against Epidemics

There was an outbreak of typhoid during April and May, largely due to the damaged water system. This was speedily brought under control, but refugees from the East and South-East often cause new infection. During the summer there was a dysentery epidemic which decreased in the colder weather. The authorities' greatest worry was typhus, brought in from Yugoslavia in mid-October. About 100 cases occurred, which were treated in an improvised isolation hospital in Steinhof. By rapid isolation and the establishment of de-lousing centres, the cases were reduced in November to 14, and no new ones have been reported.

The Allied authorities set up quarantine posts at all Vienna railway termini, where all new animals receive a thorough medical examination. The shortage of food increased tuberculosis, and this will only improve with better supplies.

In the early days the food situation was critical, until the Stalin Aid appeared. Lack of transport and destruction in the food-growing areas made the capital entirely dependent on Allied help, and by

the end of August the Soviet Government had sent 62,700 tons of food. The zonal supply scheme resulted in marked differences in the standard of living in the various zones, but this has been overcome. Now it is hoped that the demarcation lines will disappear soon, and that the surplus agrarian produce from the west of the country will reach Vienna. With the promised help by U.N.R.R.A., this will perhaps bring about a substantial increase in rations, now barely on subsistence level.

Not One Street Lamp Left

Although patriotic workers helped greatly in preventing the wanton destruction of vital electricity plants, much damage was caused. The Vienna electricity plant was destroyed to 60 per cent., 140 kilometres of high tension cables had to be relaid, 370 masts, 6,000 insulators and another 6,000 vital parts had to be replaced. The city grid had to be renewed, and 23 high-tension cables laid over rivers. There was not a single electric street lamp in the city.

The electricity company's work is evidenced by the fact that private consumers have sufficient supplies, trams and underground are running, and there is street lighting.

Tramway rolling stock suffered heavily; 16 per cent. was destroyed and 62 per cent. damaged, and only one repair shop was available. Up to now 700 trams have been repaired, but another 800 remain, in addition to the numerous current repairs; 250 kilometres of overhead cables had to be repaired and lines were interrupted by 500 bomb craters. In spite of all this, 50 per cent. of pre-war tram services and 83 per cent. of underground railway lines were restored.

Gas mains were damaged at 2,000 places and the destruction of the Danube and Danube Canal bridges interrupted all the main gas supply lines.

At first only earth gas and a mixture of earth and coke gas could be supplied

to the few districts nearest the gas works, and only later was it possible to include more districts in the gas network. Finally, on Boxing Day, the remaining 56,000 households in Vienna were supplied with gas for the first time since the end of the war. This was the result of a great effort by the technical staff, and of British and U.S. coal deliveries from the Ruhr. In December, 16,000,000 cubic metres of gas were supplied.

The Housing Problem

During the war about one-fifth of all the accommodation in Vienna was rendered uninhabitable, yet numerous repatriates and the occupation forces had to be housed. The problem was solved by dividing up big flats and requisitioning

the houses and flats of Nazis who fled; **in this way no one is without shelter in Vienna to-day.**

An allotment scheme was started and now includes about 9,000,000 square metres of land.

The Department of Works repaired the water supply network, the drainage system, and put up emergency bridges; repairs had to be carried out to hospitals, public welfare buildings, schools and fire stations. In addition, 2,000 flats were made habitable. The same Department also removed a huge amount of rubble. The Municipality completely reorganised the Fire Service, and successfully carried out the children's holiday scheme, whereby many needy children were sent to the provinces to recuperate.

AUSTRIA'S URGENT NEED OF ECONOMIC PLANNING

"Much has been said about economic planning and nationalisation during the eight months which have passed since the liberation of Austria," Secretary of State *Ing. Waldbrunner* explained to the "Socialist Correspondence." "It would be time now to start taking the appropriate measures. The representatives of the factory and office workers are ready; they are now expecting the representatives of the employers to discuss with them the proposals which have been prepared by the Chamber of Labour and the Trade Union Council.

"Naturally it is impossible to plan our economic life exclusively on the principles of one party organisation—the *Wirtschaftsbund* (the People's Party economic organisation). A solution must be found in a democratic way through negotiations with representatives of all sections of our population.

"There are people who think that so far nothing has been done in the economic field, and especially in industry, since the liberation. This is not true to facts. Admittedly the best part of our activities have been devoted more to preserving than reconstructing, but it must not be

forgotten how very important it was to collect and save what has been left of our economy. It was an important step forward that officially appointed administrators have taken charge of firms without owners or with Nazi owners, and that factory and office workers have played their part in accordance with their significance.

"It is now time to work out concrete plans and to carry them out.

"The various chambers have completed their preliminary work. Any further hesitating to solve the most important questions of our economy might be taken by the occupation authorities as incompetence and other powers might be charged with the task of reconstructing our economic life which should be planned and organised by the Austrian people itself, according to its wishes and intentions."

90 SOCIALIST MAYORS IN CARYNTHIA

For the first time in the history of *Carynthia* nearly 90 boroughs, mainly in agricultural districts, will have Socialist mayors.

NEW HABSBURGS' INTRIGUES FAILED

Another attempt by the Habsburgs to create mischief in Austria has failed thanks to the vigilance of the "Arbeiter Zeitung" and the energetic steps taken by the Socialist Minister of the Interior, *Helmer*. Out of many stories, denials, and rumours the following facts emerge.

On the 15th January two members of the Habsburg family, brothers of the pretender Otto, suddenly arrived in Innsbruck and put up at the Hotel Kreid, which incidentally is one of the headquarters of the French occupation forces. On the following day the "Arbeiter Zeitung" wrote that rumours were circulating in Tyrol that Otto Habsburg had arrived in Innsbruck, whereupon it was officially announced that these rumours were not true and that no member of the Habsburg family was in Austria.

But this denial was quickly followed by another official statement this time issued by the Socialist Minister of the Interior admitting that two members of the Habsburg family had in fact arrived in Innsbruck and that the Austrian authorities had taken the necessary steps.

The statement added that Monarchist leaflets had been distributed and that those responsible had been arrested. The Minister of the Interior had also disbanded the Monarchist organisation "Reichsbund der Osterricher" and its property had been confiscated.

Some Pertinent Questions

"Arbeiter Zeitung," commenting on this official announcement, writes: "It is to be noted with satisfaction that Minister of the Interior *Helmer* has taken vigorous steps against Monarchist intrigues. The incident, however, requires further explanation; in particular, people would like to know who, after the first warning announcement in 'Arbeiter Zeitung,' gave such false information to the Federal Chancellor and the Government that they issued yesterday's denial, now refuted by facts. How big was the circle of Monarchist agents, and who shielded whom? We have

a grave question to address to the People's Party: "Is it correct that prominent members of the People's Party belonged to the executive of the dissolved Monarchist organisation in Innsbruck?"

"A rumour is circulating in Tyrol that the two Habsburgs appeared in the uniform of Allied officers. There was also a rumour that the Minister of the Interior has already dismissed the Director of Security for Tyrol. We hope that this is confirmed."

"Arbeiter Zeitung" was Right

Meanwhile it has been confirmed that the Director of Security has been sacked quite obviously because he had neglected his duties and that prominent members of the "People's Party" belonged to the executive of the dissolved Monarchist organisation.

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At the meeting of the Allied Control Council held on 23rd January, the French representative General *Bethouard* made a statement concerning the recent arrival in Austria of the "Dukes" Karl Ludwig and Robert and the action taken against it. The Council repeated its decision to give the Austrian Government all possible support for maintaining the Austrian Statute which expels the Habsburg family from Austria and to prevent their return.

The Council agreed to immediate steps to prevent any illegal entry of refugees from other countries into Austria.

AN AUSTRIAN MINISTER IN LONDON

We are glad to learn that Austria has now resumed diplomatic relations with this country. The Austrian Legation in London will shortly be opened and Minister *Schmid* has been appointed as Austrian Government representative. Schmid is a career diplomat and was Austrian Minister in Warsaw and Belgrade before the annexation. Austrian Ministers in Paris and Washington have also been appointed.

A FRENCH SOCIALIST ON AUSTRIA'S LIBERTY

Oreste Rosenfeld, chief editor of "Le Populaire," who was delegated to represent the French Socialists at the Annual Conference of the Austrian Socialists, spent several days in Vienna and on his return informed the French public in a series of articles and broadcasts on his impressions there. We are reprinting below a short extract of his reports.

WITH GRIEF IN MY HEART . . .

"I had not seen Vienna since 1931 and I hardly recognised it. I wandered through the devastated streets, I stood in front of the destroyed Opera House, I saw the damaged Houses of Parliament and the ruins of Ballhausplatz. With grief in my heart I stood in front of the big blocks of flats which—rightly—had been the pride of Red Vienna. And I have looked into the faces of people and I have searched in vain for a smile, all I found was grief. No, Vienna without light, without "joie de vivre," without gaiety, is Vienna no longer.

"Austria is reproached because she supplied soldiers for the German Army. But has it been forgotten that she was compelled to do so just as Alsace-Lorraine

was since 1940? And 80,000 Austrians are still prisoners of war.

A Promise

"The Austrian Socialists did fight, first against clerico-fascism, then against German Nazism, they have done all they possibly could to fight Hitler. The Austrian people did not succumb to the dictatorship of a Dollfuss or Schuschnigg, not even to Hitler, but now it is near despair, in spite of having been liberated.

"Its disappointment is great. This country was promised liberty and independence, why then is it not accepted in the community of free nations?"

"It is in the interest of democracy and world peace to do so. Why is the military occupation being kept up so long? Would it not suffice to maintain the Inter-Allied Control Commission in order to help the legal government of the Austrian Republic to exterminate Nazism and to reconstruct its badly shaken economy? Only then could Austria become a stable contributor to democracy and peace in a part of Europe which has so often been shaken by economic and political rivalries."

STORY OF FIFTY FIREMEN

Among the stories which only now emerge of the resistance struggle carried on by Austrian anti-Nazis during the war is that of the trial of fifty members of the Vienna fire brigade before an S.S. Court. The public prosecutor asked for no less than 46 death sentences. Five men were sentenced to death and two of them were executed.

From the days of Red Vienna the Viennese fire brigade had maintained its spirit of solidarity and political loyalty. One of its commanders, Weissel, was executed by the Dollfuss Government after the fighting in 1934. His comrades continued his work.

The Nazis tried to suppress this activity. Soon four firemen were arrested and charged with having "formed a Communist cell." They were given

long prison sentences. Their comrades began to collect money for the families of the victims.

The Gestapo Steps In

The Gestapo got wind of this. In January, 1943, the firemen, Zack and Plackholm, believed to be the "ring-leaders" of the relief work, were arrested. By the end of the year, fifty men were in gaol.

For the sake of protecting the city against the danger from incendiary bombs, the Nazi fire brigade leader, Colonel Bernaschek tried to plead for clemency because he did not want the city's fire service to lose its most efficient men. He was replaced by an S.S. leader. In February, 1944, the prisoners were taken from the police gaol to the Criminal Court. The prisoners, particularly Zack,

were cruelly tortured. On March 13th, they were brought before a court consisting mainly of S.S. men.

The trial lasted for 12 days. While the rest of the men were sentenced to long prison terms, five were sentenced to death. All prisoners were then taken to Mauthausen concentration camp.

A Hero's Death

At the end of October, the five sentenced men were taken to Vienna. There, two of them, Zack and Plackholm, were informed that they would be executed. On the morning of October 31st, they were taken to the military shooting range at Kagran. All their fellow prisoners and the entire Vienna fire brigade were lined up in an open square and forced to witness the execution. Zack and Plackholm were stood up against posts. They were blindfolded against their protest. Then they were shot. Their last words were: "Greet our comrades."

The rest of the imprisoned firemen were taken back to Mauthausen concentration camp where they were kept up to the moment of liberation.

AID TO AUSTRIA APPEAL COMMITTEE

There are two corrections to be made to the report on relief to Austria in our issue of January 15th. Reference was made to the transfer of money to buy food for Austria in countries where there is a surplus. This is one of the *possibilities* that are being considered. But as yet, while we are hoping for Government permission, no definite arrangements have been made.

We have also referred to the help members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) are giving in organising the distribution in Austria. This, however, does not mean that local groups of the Society of Friends in this country can be burdened, on top of their religious and numerous philanthropic activities, with collecting clothes for us. When you have clothing material for Austria, therefore, do not "inform the nearest group of the Society of Friends to collect it," but send it to the Austrian Labour Club. And we apologise to the Quakers for any inconvenience our enthusiasm may have caused to their local groups.

BRITISH M.P.s. IN AUSTRIA

A British Parliamentary Delegation including the Labour members Barbara Ayrton-Gould, Dr. S. W. Jeger, P. Daines and M. Orbach visited Austria recently. In Vienna they spoke in nine mass meetings which were overcrowded despite the cold. They visited many working class flats and spoke to the "man in the street." The delegation also toured the Russian zone and went to Klagenfurt and Styria. Before leaving they were received by President Dr. Renner who expressed his thanks for the help which Austria is being given by England.

SWEDISH RELIEF CONVOY ARRIVES

On January 19th a convoy of 95 lorries, 39 trailers, a bus and 10 cars arrived in Austria from Sweden, bringing 315,000 kg. of food, medicines and clothing provided by the Swedish Government, the Swedish Labour movement, and the "Save the Children" Relief Organisation.

40 YEARS WORKERS' SYMPHONY CONCERTS

The last concert held in the Austrian Labour Club celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Viennese Workers' Symphony Concerts. The very best of Viennese chamber music was performed: Schubert—piano, violin, songs and the famous Trout Quintett. Although it was a frosty Sunday the hall was packed and a music-loving audience acclaimed the artists: Elsa Gross, Elise Wilczek, Maria Lidka, Marjorie Skinner, Ernst Poszonyi, Dr. May, and Robert Mayer. But the lion's share of the applause and the cheers went to our friend Dr. D. J. Bach who, forty years ago, initiated the Workers' Symphony Concerts in Vienna and who ever since organised them, thus contributing uniquely to the cultural education of the Austrian workers.

AUSTRIAN LABOUR CLUB

SUNDAY, February 3rd at 7 p.m.

Jenny Lee, M.P.: "The American Loan and Its Implications."

SUNDAY, February 10th at 5 p.m.

Group of Austrian Socialists. Annual Meeting. (Members only).