

MEMORANDUM OF THE AUSTRIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION ON THE AUSTRIAN PROBLEM

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In view of the course the war is likely to take in the next few months, it seems to us that the right moment has arrived for doing justice in a practical way both to the international importance of Austria in general and to her significance in the future of Great Britain in particular.

(2)

The success of the Nazis in Austria should not be misleading. They were mainly due to the following facts:

- (a) A long period of mass unemployment;
- (b) The terror and unscrupulous propaganda by the Nazis;
- (c) The inactivity of the Great Powers owing to their unpreparedness.

(3)

It should not be overlooked that the annexation of Austria was brought about by force; that the plebiscite of April 10th, 1938, was a fraudulent manœuvre; that 65 to 70 per cent. of the Austrians were against the *Anschluss*; that Austria, although with inadequate means and methods, had been fighting for her independence against Germany since 1933.

(4)

The Austrians are not Germans in any sense. It ought to be recognized that the Austrians differ from the Germans in a number of ways; in their history, their origin and mental outlook, their traditions, etc. Not having lived in an exclusively German environment, their spirit has never been moulded by the Prussians. The fact that they speak the same language as the Germans is not a proof of their being German. The common language is merely the product of historical conditions, a fact which is equally true of Britain and U.S.A., or Germany and the greater part of Switzerland, etc.

(5)

The assertion that an independent Austria would not be viable is either deliberate demagoguery or the result of ignorance. Austria has furnished irrefutable proof that she is capable of existing as an independent State—since she did, in fact, have an independent existence during the period between the two great wars. Had not the rest of

the world pursued a stupid and short-sighted policy which shook the economic foundations of all countries, Austria would not have experienced mass unemployment and all its consequences.

(6)

It is equally erroneous to assume that Austria, to survive economically, must be propped up by Germany. On the contrary, both history and recent experience have shown that for the economic life of Austria, the East, South and South-East of Europe are the areas allotted by Austria's economic life. There can be no doubt that in an economic system, far-seeing and planning ahead, independent Austria will stand a good chance not only of surviving, but of developing her life to the full.

(7)

The social strata of the Austrian people and their mentality should afford guarantees against any form of extreme being successful in Austria, whether the extremes be of the right or left. The Austrian population consists chiefly of workers, independent small tradesmen, and independent farmers. Every one of them an individualist, but at the same time, an international-thinking democrat. This sociological structure of the people should be taken into consideration when dealing with the Austrian question.

(8)

The understanding and sympathy for Great Britain (which have always been traditional amongst the Austrians) speak well for Austria as a potential ally of this country. It would be a pity to neglect this potentiality. Austria, situated as she is in the heart of Europe, might be developed to become a corner-stone of British policy in Europe.

(9)

One should not ask impossibilities from the Austrian people. They are living under the greatest terror, like the other countries occupied by the Germans. The mass executions of Austrians in recent months show clearly the growing resistance of the Austrians to the Germans. It should be recognized that the overwhelming majority of the Austrian people hates and despises its German rulers whom it wishes to shake off.

(10)

The restoration of an independent and democratic Austria appears to us to be a European necessity. Austria, having been annexed by force, should be treated as a country occupied by the enemy. Austrians, because of their history and tradition, should be regarded as the natural allies of Great Britain.