

Austria's Utopia

BY P. W. WILSON

*From his perilous niche between the restive forces of fascism
to the north and south, Chancellor Dollfuss proclaims
a new and divine form of government*

WHETHER she realized it or not, the old lady whose spiritual consolation was the blessed word Mesopotamia started what has become a cult of the period. Everywhere we run across people who are seeking to discover a Mesopotamia where they may abide.

Some have found a Mesopotamia in Moscow; others, in Berlin; others prefer Columbia University where the professors come from, and a few still haunt the adorable *ashram* of Gandhi near Allahabad.

Plato's Mesopotamia was a republic in which the babies were so mixed in the maternity hospitals that a mother was spared the worry of knowing her own child—which communal clinic, as psychologists are aware, is an effective safeguard against the danger of unscientific affection.

The Nazis permit mother love in their Mesopotamia, always assuming that the grandparents are Aryan. The Jews thus find themselves once more in the Scriptural predicament of the Patriarch Abraham whose Mesopotamia had to be everywhere except in the Beulah Land itself. Once more there is a migration from Ur of the Chaldees, and a

Chosen People seek a country where Hivites and Perizites and other Arabs warmly welcome the pioneers of Zionism.

With Mesopotamias the trouble has always been that, however desirable, they are difficult to get at. Idealists, yearning for a heaven upon earth, are like the Prophet Ezekiel.

They dream of the Temple again rising glorious in a New Jerusalem. They awake to discover that they still dwell "among the captives of the River of Chebar."

Sir Thomas More wrote hopefully of Utopia but, differing from King Henry VIII over matrimonial theology, he had his head cut off. Samuel Butler discovered Erewhon but Kingsley identified the territory as the Never-Never-Land. Even Lewis Carroll was only able to see his Wonderland through a looking-glass, and Professor Moley, who brought the Brain Trust up to date by explaining to President Roosevelt, Dr. Wirt and others what is meant by the New Deal, has been driven like Dante—whose also was a Vita Nuova—into exile. He is not even permitted to run the Stock Exchange.

Hence the world-wide interest in the news that, in the fulness of time, a Mesopotamian millennium is actually to be brought into existence. No longer will the statesmen of benevolent aspirations, if such there be, have to depend upon the changes and chances of an old lady's fancy. At last, there is to be a Land, not of Promise merely, but of performance. The blessedness of Mesopotamia is to be, as they say at Rotary Clubs, "put over."

II

As a guessing competition, the whereabouts of the Utopia-in-Recovery would have provided much innocent amusement and even circulation for the more pictorial and less printable newspapers. For who would have supposed—in advance of the stimulating truth—that the Paradise of the Post-War Period would be—of all countries—Austria? For Strauss and the Blue Danube Valse, here, indeed, is a triumph!

Austria, we had been told, was a head without a body; and while that also was true, at one time, of Sir Thomas More, it must always be borne clearly in mind that Utopia was produced when the illustrious author's head and body were still happily united by what diplomatists, in these days, call an *anschluss*. However, there is a certain sense of relief in losing imperial appendages. Austria is now a second Switzerland in Mid-Europe, and what defense does she need? A regenerated "homeland"—to quote Chancellor Dollfuss—is able to put her whole trust in those jealousies on the part of neighboring powers which never fail. It is under the most favorable circumstances that she is able to work out her salvation.

It was Chesterton who, in his pon-

derous yet paradoxical manner, once remarked that Christianity had not failed—it had never been tried. Chancellor Dollfuss has announced an "ambition to evolve new forms" of government in which "Christian love must unite all sections of the populace" and "youth must be trained in the Christian spirit." What makes the Austrian experiment so challenging is the notion of Dollfuss that Christianity, if permitted in Austria, may spread elsewhere. The "new forms," he says, are to "serve as an example to other greater regions."

For the United States, especially, this suggestion is of interest. Various post-prandial conspirators have been promoting what may be called the switch from Jefferson. Why not switch from Jefferson to Dollfuss? If the question be not premature in an electoral year, why should not the New World as well as the Old World be converted to Christianity?

In the Middle Ages, Austria subjugated Europe by marriage. Why should she not conquer the world that is bigger than Europe by ideas? Why should she not be the leader in what some will describe as the great renaissance, and others as the great reaction?

Chancellor Dollfuss is himself a devout Catholic. To him, Christianity is interpreted by the Popes, and Europe—never at a loss to find a word for whatever happens—has defined his policy as "papalization." Specifically, the Chancellor bases his decisions on an Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, promulgated by Leo XIII in the year 1891, and developed into a second Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* by His Holiness, Pius XI.

These Encyclicals define the meaning and the duties of wealth in terms of such candor, such sanity, such a sense of

the fundamental equities which should determine the relations between capital and labor, that they should be circulated everywhere and read by everybody, to whatever faith, religious or irreligious, he may be affiliated. Indeed, they should be discussed at dinner parties with Dr. Wirt. If Austria can carry out that equitable programme of economics, there need be little fear, in years to come, of communism.

Other Encyclicals, issued at the Vatican, are no less significant. The views of Pope Pius XI on matters of sex have been stated without compromise. The church condemns divorce and will approve of no birth control save continence. She demands that—as in Quebec—the race be permitted its natural increase. The acceptance of these principles by a state that exercises a comprehensive authority over education, the theatre, the screen, the radio, the press and all avenues of publicity is manifestly an event of far-reaching significance. Austria, like Italy, stands for the large family, and sterilization—legalized in Germany—would be, we take it, deadly heresy.

III

We can discuss the Austrian Utopia with more freedom because, as it happens, the Papal Encyclicals do not lay down any rules affecting “forms” of government. To the Pope, it is a matter of indifference whether a country be a republic, a monarchy, or whatever it be. In Austria, there is thus a wide field of statesmanship that can be examined without danger of touching on ecclesiastical susceptibilities. What, then, is this constitution that is to be, in Cromwell’s phrase, “a New Model” for the rest of the world?

In this Twentieth Century, with its

marvels of science and research, its airplanes flying overhead and its strap-hangers in the subways underground, the idea that a country should be well governed is, it must be confessed, a little audacious. Indeed, when Gladstone, in 1879, suggested something of the kind to Austria, the Habsburgs were so offended that, as Prime Minister, he had to apologize, and the Ambassador of the Emperor Franz Joseph in London was assured that the other Grand Old Man had not really been so undiplomatic as to think of the well-being of Vienna. All that he had desired was votes in Mid-Lothian.

Not that complaints against the Viennese, so audible before the War, were ever due to the fact that Austrians governed themselves. In any country, not dominated by Hitler or Mussolini, that is apt to happen. It was the Austrian insistence on governing other people that, to Bohemians and Croats, was sometimes so annoying. Even the Magyars of Hungary insisted that, if subject nations had to be governed at all, they would prefer themselves to rule over their own Transylvanians and Austria also, if it came to a test of Dual Monarchy.

If, then, Chancellor Dollfuss likes to bless the Austrians with the administration that Austrians deserve, whatever it be, there is not the remotest reason why the rest of the world should not relegate the always entertaining task of criticizing other people’s business to those few scores of thousands of Socialists who, from time to time, refuse to hear one another speak in Madison Square Gardens. Even the Socialists might be a little lenient in their denunciations.

It is true that Chancellor Dollfuss, in his brisk and brotherly fashion, blew

many of them and their homes into smithereens. But it was all in a good cause. Only by smashing the Socialists could he abolish the parliamentary system, and if the parliamentary system had not been abolished, the Nazis penetrating Austria from the north and the Fascists confronting them on the south would have made a battleground—so it is argued—of another gallant little Belgium. By bombarding the Socialists, Chancellor Dollfuss thus kept everybody else at a safe distance.

There is, however, the question whether the rest of the world is to become Austrian, and as we pursue the inquiry, we are conscious of a strange sensation. All of us have heard of the wayfarer who, lost in the forest, walks onward, sure that sometime he will get somewhere. Suddenly he arrives at a stone, a tree, a pool of water that seems to be familiar. Can it be that he has been moving all day in a circle—that, starting west, his face is now turned to the east? It is not “new forms” that greet him. He has returned, without knowing it, to the place whence he started.

In an era of transition, as men believed it to be, lived Shakespeare, and the Elizabethans were convinced that they were getting somewhere. But the wisest of Shakespeare’s clowns talked of time as a whirligig. The hands of the clock, like the sails of Don Quixote’s windmill, whisk us round and round and leave us precisely where we were.

We can imagine Cavour and Mazzini turning in their graves and muttering, “Why bother us over that old stuff! We have known it all our lives.” Metternich, on his side, would remark, “Clearly, I am not quite so dead and buried as a magnificent funeral, which I greatly appreciated at the time, led

me to believe. That, my dear Dollfuss, is the kind of constitution that, in the day when congresses danced in Vienna, we used to write over breakfast in bed.”

The constitution of Austria may be described as the constitution of Europe herself after the Battle of Waterloo. It is the constitution that broke down in France when, in 1830, King Charles X fled to England. It is the constitution that broke down in Turin and Naples when Italy achieved her *risorgimento*. It is the constitution from which, in 1848, the liberals of Germany fled to the United States.

IV

To Chancellor Dollfuss, it may be no disadvantage that his constitution follows precedent. Why should not history repeat herself? Has not democracy been tried? Has it not failed? Let us be thankful that there are still Bourbons among us whose principles are to learn nothing and to forget nothing.

The constitution of Austria thus omits the one fatal phrase that, by a slip of the tongue, Abraham Lincoln introduced into his otherwise admirable address at Gettysburg. It is government of the people. It is government for the people. But it is not government by the people.

Politely but firmly, representative institutions are obliterated. Nobody votes for anybody, nobody has a right to vote against him. The people may approve of the laws. They may disapprove. In either event, their sole duty is to obey, and obedience includes the payment of taxes for purposes on which the citizen, who has to find the money, has no right to express an opinion.

The constitution of Austria has thus the great merit of simplicity. It consists of a Council of State, sitting in

secret and composed of forty to fifty members, nominated by the sovereign head of the country, whoever he may be. There are three assistant councils also sitting in secret. The first is drawn from the clergy and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church. It deals with "culture." The second represents industrialists, bankers, the learned professions and civil servants. Its field is economics. The third council handles local affairs. It includes governors of provinces and their financial advisers.

For the duty of promulgating decisions, a Federal Chamber, composed of delegates from the first four bodies, has been constituted. Its few sittings will be public. But those sittings will be entirely ceremonial. Interpellations, criticisms and amendments to legislation will be out of order. Measures will be submitted to the Chamber and, there and then, voted upon, without debate. As the delegates to the Chamber are themselves responsible for elaborating the measures on which they vote, it is assumed that the procedure, like the royal assent in Great Britain, will be wholly formal.

One pinnacle only remains to be added to the edifice and it happens to be the highest. If King Charles I were running his mild and magnificent eye over this pronunciamiento, he would look up a little puzzled. "Excellent—excellent, my Lord Stafford—what you would call 'thorough,'" he would remark with enthusiasm, but he would add, a little severely, "Is there not something—we would rather say, some one—whom you have overlooked? What forgotten man, my Lord, is to be the sovereign head of this fortunate and sensible country?"

It is not always remembered that Austria has at the moment what, at the

White House, is known as a President and, after patient research, we gather that the illustrious name of this supernumerary in Vienna is Dr. Wilhelm Miklas. Not that he is wholly without an object in life. It is after all something to enjoy the almost unique distinction in Europe of being permitted to appear on public occasions not in military uniform but in a frock coat and a silk hat.

In October, 1931, Dr. Miklas was elected for a term of six years. He can thus resign at any time, in which event—how smoothly it all works out!—Otto, the boy Emperor, would be as available as the boy Emperor of China himself for the throne of his ancestors. With Admiral Horthy, Regent of Hungary, also awaiting a Habsburg to take his place and with Italy prepared to provide the Habsburg princes with corresponding princesses of royal prestige, developments are not impossible; and all that we would ask here is whether the restoration of the Habsburgs is to be included in the "example"—the "new forms"—which the rest of the world is to follow. Are the Hohenzollerns to be again All Highest in Germany? Is a Romanoff to preside over the tomb of Lenin in Moscow? Is King George again to nominate the governors of Rhode Island and Massachusetts and send his Hessians to Bunker Hill? Will there have to be, in due course, a year of revolutions, 1948, similar to 1848, and a second Declaration of Independence, signed not only at Philadelphia but in every capital, the wide world over, where men and women have been denied the right to call their souls their own?

v

In a constitution like that of Austria, there are manifest advantages. Take

Tammany Hall. It is to Vienna, obviously, that this invaluable but impoverished haunt of generosity should be transferred. There would be no need to organize ward-heelers and riff-raff of that kind. The bullet has resumed its sway over the ballot, and it would be the Boss who appoints the aldermen and the mayors and everybody else. With the press and the radio under a censorship, with the right of public meeting denied, with legislatures suppressed, with secret police watching over all conceivable discontents, the grafter may laugh at the law. He has no need to waive immunity. He is immune, and no Samuel Seabury survives except in a concentration camp, dedicated under a dictatorship to the survival—indeed, the seclusion—of the fittest.

Where the people are illiterate, autocracy is, of course, assured. The trouble arises in those misguided countries where, owing to a lapse in intelligence, education has been allowed to creep in. The citizen is encouraged to absorb the philosophies of the ages. His taste in art is stimulated. He unravels the riddles of science. His spirit soars like a flame into the realms of the imagination. He builds bridges across rivers. He drives tunnels through mountains. But there is one Holy of Holies into which it would be sacrilege for him to enter. Never must he dare to express even the most casual opinion of a bureaucracy, consisting of men no abler, and certainly no more honest than he is himself, whom he employs because there must be somebody to run the affairs of his country.

It was, if we remember aright, the Walrus who said to the Carpenter that, if only seven maids with seven mops could clear away the sand from the seashore, the marine landscape would be

greatly improved. Public opinion is also one of those elements in life that some of us could do without. But, like the sand, even public opinion has its uses. Publicity agents use it to build their little sand castles that the tide sweeps away, and it is, broadly, a restraint on injustice. When public opinion is aroused, there is always a reason.

Take capital and labor. The Austrian Economic Council is to sit in secret and preserve a strict impartiality. But that does not alter the fact that it will consist of persons mainly representing capital and almost wholly sympathetic with those who "have." After all, the offense of the Socialists was that they belonged to and spoke for the "have-nots." If labor be excluded from the influences on government, how will labor be treated? It is a very interesting question and even more interesting is the reply of Chancellor Dollfuss.

In the United States, there has been drawn a distinction—admittedly rough and ready, yet divinely authorized—between what we are accustomed to call the sacred and the secular. "Render unto Caesar," we are taught, "the things that are Caesar's, and unto God, the things that are God's." The slogan, therefore, has been "a free church and a free school in a free state," and in effect, that is the basis of citizenship throughout the English-speaking world, and particularly in India where there are many and competing faiths. It has been assumed as a matter of course that Europe, emerging out of medieval traditions, would follow Great Britain in abolishing religious tests and allowing the same status to H. G. Wells as a free thinker, to Lord Reading as a Jew, to Cardinal Bourne as a Roman Catholic, to David Lloyd George as a Baptist, to the Archbishop of Canterbury

as an Anglican, and—be it added—to Dean Inge.

On the continent of Europe we have seen a different situation. The nations are still convinced that the Deity is of importance—negatively or positively—to sovereignty. On the one hand, there is Soviet Russia, declaring that religion is a narcotic of the people and fostering godless leagues. On the other hand, there is an endeavor to restore theocracy.

Chancellor Dollfuss has no need to seek support of public opinion. Like Savonarola, thundering prophecies from his pulpit, he relies on a more stupendous sanction. Any little uneasiness that there may be over the “new forms” is alleviated by the declaration that the plan is known to “emanate from God Almighty.” For it has never been easy to argue with Mount Sinai. The Ten Commandments usually end a discussion.

Anybody who opposes anything that is done under the Austrian Constitution is thus faced, not merely by Chancellor Dollfuss—though remarks on his stature are now *lèse majesté*—but by the disapproval of that Universal Mind which, through eternal ages, created and maintained the illimitable universe. Oppose an injustice, expose a fraud, assert a right, and it is blasphemy. Every official of the Government, whatever his position, his motives, his character, his greed, his prejudices, his malevolence, is an agent of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, to whose

infallibility—to whose speculations, if such there be—the wisest and the most honest of private citizens must submit as an act of personal piety, to be withheld at peril of eternal punishment.

To express a personal opinion on such a situation would be preposterous. We must “wait and see”—as Asquith used to say—how it works out. If we are to have autocracy, we would certainly prefer the rule of the church, with its profound vision of the universals, to the crude experimentation of a half-baked atheism. After all, the church does give us music and architecture and reverence in art and a literature that is so well worth reading that it endures through the ages.

On the other hand, we say frankly that, as it seems to us, the church is greatest when it seeks and accepts no privileges from the state. We prefer the spiritual splendor of Catholicism in the English-speaking world to the political downfall of the Papal States. It is all very well for Chancellor Dollfuss to say that “freedom of conscience must be guaranteed to every man.” He also says that society must be defended against “those who follow false prophets.” Who are the false prophets? John Wesley? George Fox? Dwight L. Moody? Sir Wilfred Grenfell of Labrador? Some of the false prophets have rendered service to mankind.

The victory over falsity is not to be won by force—only by faith. There is one way and only one way of counteracting a lie. It is to spread the truth.



Sand-Shakers in the People's Forum

BY RICHARD LEE STROUT

Why do we put up with this archaic Senate of ours?

IT is a crowded day in the Senate. Look down from your gallery seat on the men below. Even the most casual observer recognizes in a moment many a face constantly portrayed in picture and caricature over the land. That leonine head there, it goes with the name of William Edgar Borah—Senator-at-large for the United States! There goes Huey Long—what loud clothes he wears!—the crowds that jam the public galleries crane their necks to see *him*. The jump between Long and Borah is the full measure of the extraordinary diversity of personality and outlook which the nation back yonder—which sends both Borah and Long to this Senate chamber—represents.

The legislative spokesmen below the galleries reflect, in truth, the contrasts of the nation at large. Here is the conservative contingent from New England, dressed in orthodoxy, from clothes to ideas; here again is the refulgent J. Hamilton Lewis, sartorially superb, whose oddly tinted whiskers (they are not really pink) come, of all places, from Chicago! There is Mr. Garner, too, ensconced on his throne, Texas Triumphant, looking, with his

ruddy cheeks and enormous white eyebrows, like a magnificently successful caricature of himself.

Some of the others are not so well known, but your real Senate gallery god, of whom there are many, recognizes them at once. There is for example, the brooding Hiram Johnson, with his double-breasted coat and white-piped waistcoat; James Couzens, English-born and truculent as a son of John Bull; tall Henrik Shipstead, erstwhile dentist, bringing a breath of liberalism and a Swedish accent from the Minnesota wheat fields as the sole Farmer-Laborite; Copeland, with his carnation; Wagner, with his comfortable smile; Bronson Cutting with his white forelock and lisp (who discussed "spiritual aspe-wation" and "twiple we-sponsibility" in last year's Philippine debate); big-fisted, burly Joe Robinson, Democratic leader, who sits massive and immobile till the time comes to settle a question, when he settles it; Elmer Thomas, inflationist, tall, handsome, humorless; falcon-faced Carter Glass, most beloved man in the Senate, drawling financial wisdom from the side of his mouth ("Think," said