

Chapter 11

The Short- and Long-Term Effects of the Authoritarian Regime and of Nazism in Austria: the Burden of a 'Second Dictatorship'

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One major reason for Austria's difficulties in coming to terms with its dictatorial past is the well-known, but often underestimated, fact that it had experienced two kinds of dictatorship, 'Austro-fascism' and Nazism. Generally speaking, both versions were embedded in the country's political, social and cultural traditions, they displayed some – or even many – corresponding aspects, but nevertheless fought each other. After the defeat of Nazism, the establishment of a consensual democracy in Austria had necessarily to exclude the former Nazis from government and to bring the left (Social Democrats and communists) together with the former 'Austro-fascists' (Catholic conservatives or Christian-Socials) in a coalition government. Similar political constellations can be observed in many European states. In the Austrian case, the specificity was that – given the great differences between 'Austro-fascism' and Nazism – one kind of dictatorial rule was whitewashed in order to leave the Catholic conservative element a chance to preserve its historic roots to some extent. Thus, and besides other factors, the drive for a critical evaluation of the non-democratic traditions inside Austrian society was reduced even more and the tendency to sacrifice the historic truth to 'conflict reduction' and compromise was high. Only after 1989 has it become clear that comparable – not equal – structures existed in those countries which had experienced another kind of second dictatorship, i.e. communism. But in the 1980s it became increasingly evident that structurally similar problems had been imposed on many Western European states where Nazi occupation and persecution had produced collaborators, and where the myth of a generalised resistance movement often functioned in the same way as the 'victim' myth in Austria.

Along this principle line of interpretation of the Austrian case, in this chapter I will examine in detail the effects of both kinds of non-democratic experiences, their interference, compensation or reinforcement, distinguishing between temporary, short-term and long-term effects on various political and societal levels.¹

'Austro-fascism': Interlude and Austrian Symptom

When Nazism gained its electoral landslide in 1932,² and Austria approached the trough of the economic depression, the Christian-Social Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss gave in to Mussolini's pressure and Austrian authoritarian traditions, and included the *Heimwehr* in his government. Step-by-step, he abolished the civil rights and the social gains of the working classes. Exploiting a crisis in the internal rules of the houses of Parliament, he began to turn Austria towards non-democratic rule. In 1933, shortly after Nazism's seizure of power in Germany, Austria became a semi-dictatorship. This was turned into a full-fledged dictatorship after the regime's victory over the uprising of the militant parts of Social Democracy in February 1934. Several days of bloody street battles in Vienna and other industrial centres were to leave deep wounds in the memories of the members of the non-Nazi 'camps' of Austria's political culture, far beyond 1938 and 1945. This fact explains why, after 1945, overcoming this political trench became the main task for the reconstruction of Austrian democracy for so many years.

The *Heimwehr* was the only openly fascist factor in the emerging Christian 'Ständestaat' ('corporatist state') and, though already in decline, temporarily gained strong influence. Nevertheless, the dictatorship of Dollfuss (who was murdered during the Nazi putsch of July 1934) and his successor, Kurt Schuschnigg, remained within the limits of traditional dictatorial rule common at that time in nearly all European countries except Western and Northern Europe.³ Their authoritarian regime used mainly the police force, bureaucratic procedures and their political monopoly. Thus it served rather to demobilise than to mobilise the crisis-driven middle classes and to alienate large segments of the working classes from the Austrian state.⁴

The authoritarian regime imitated half-heartedly the style of organisation, propaganda and politics of the two leading fascist powers in the south and west of Austria. In May 1934, the official proclamation of a corporatist constitution remained hardly more than an ideological cover for what was essentially governmental and bureaucratic autocracy.⁵ Nevertheless, for four years the so-called 'Austro-fascist' regime managed to mediate (using force) between contrasting social and political interests, and to resist Nazi pressures from inside and outside. Among other centralising facts it established a unified 'Austrian Federation of Trade Unions' (ÖGB), which became a precursor of the post-1945 unified organisation of labour unions, and thus this continuity can serve as an example to explain how inventions of the authoritarian dictatorship unintentionally paved the way for the structures of the Second Republic.

The authoritarian regime's deflationary economic policy was largely unsuccessful. Therefore, it was not able to leave many architectural monuments. Among its proposed construction programme, aimed at reducing the huge unemployment rate of about 25 percent, only a few prestigious road projects were actually carried out.

Several of them, like the 'Großglockner High Alpine Road', were finished only by the Nazi regime. A few monumental buildings were constructed in a style blending leftovers from the Viennese architectural modernity of 1900 with Alpine provincialism and contemporary Italian and German imperial pomp. Among them were the Viennese radio station building and the Salzburg Festival House, and the remarkably progressive exhibition pavilion at the Art Biennale in Venice.⁶ These expressions of state art were thought to serve as the representation of an Austrian identity, and this is in fact the case still. Such projects offer a taste of the original official ideology of the authoritarian regime, which sought to counter the German identity of so many Austrians and to resist the aspirations and pressures from the side of Nazi Germany.

The elements of this artificial collective identity, to which I will return later on, were condensed in the call for a plebiscite in March 1938 which the failing authoritarian state planned as a last minute rescue, but had to abandon under Hitler's pressure: 'For a free and German, independent, social, Christian and united Austria!'⁷ These adjectives characterised in concise form the programme of the 'Christian corporatist state', but also show the specific advantages and weaknesses of its concept of Austria.

Although this mostly Catholic Austrian identity was defined by stressing political independence from Germany, its inventors referred simultaneously to a shared German cultural identity without building on democratic legitimisation and economic and social success. Austria's identity should not be a 'small German', a Prussian one, but rather a 'Greater German' identity of the type of the old Holy Roman Empire before the exclusion of Austria in 1866. It should fulfil a European mission and constitute a bridge between German culture on the one side and other nations, especially in the south east of Europe on the other side. In retrospect, at least, it seems obvious that an ideological construction which presented itself with reference to the 'other Germany' or the 'better Germans' was bound to fall in the face of the pan-German enthusiasm of the Nazis. Austrian communists also developed the idea of a separate Austrian nation,⁸ but did not succeed in influencing a large share of the dissatisfied workers. Nevertheless, this kind of Austrian national identity was to become the basis on which the successful nation-building process of the Second Republic was possible, and in this respect, modern Austrian national identity can be considered to some extent also as a long-term effect of the Catholic conservative dictatorship.

In March 1938, after a shift in the European balance of power in Hitler's favour, the Austrian regime collapsed. Fascist Italy, Austria's main protector, had abandoned it for the 'Axis' with Germany. Leaving out of consideration the acts of radical anti-Semitism and the severe persecution of the political left which Nazism imposed on Austria, it should be noted that immediately after the *Anschluss*, a stringent purge of Austrian fascism was carried out by the Nazis. This was certainly the main reason why the Second Republic seven years later could acquit the 'Austro-fascists', as I have noted already in the introductory remarks. Indeed many of them had suffered during the Nazi period and not a few became audacious anti-Nazi resistance fighters. And, as a matter of fact, many of the former 'Austro-fascists', having experienced the purges of the Nazi dictatorship, after 1945, permanently turned away from their earlier non-democratic traditions.

Impacts of the Nazi Dictatorship (1938–1945)

In March 1938, the *Anschluss* was perceived by a great many Austrians as the recognition of their claim to the national self-determination they had been denied after 1918 by the treaties of Versailles and Saint Germain. Thus, the *Anschluss* of 1938 resulted not only from immense military pressure from abroad and the invasion of the *Wehrmacht*⁹ but also from the seizure of power by the National Socialists using the hierarchical structure inside the 'corporate state' as well as a quasi-revolutionary uprising by the Nazi masses from below. Within a few months, national socialism reshaped and radicalised the existing dictatorial rule and thoroughly transformed society and politics in Austria.¹⁰

The specific irresistibility and radicalism of the Nazi dictatorship, its neopagan *völkisch* ideology and its fervent militaristic expansionism constituted a great difference from the former 'Austro-fascist' regime. However, with some simplification it can be said that Nazism had similar sociopolitical aims, in part the same targets of its acts of persecution, and to some extent even related means of force.¹¹ Therefore, Nazism could use the autocratic structures already imposed on Austria by the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg government. After autumn 1938, the tendencies towards the internal (and external) radicalisation of the Third Reich began to override these last constraints upon totalitarian rule, driven by the most radical Nazi forces: the SS. But Nazi terror always went together with regime consensus among large segments of Austrian society.

The Nazi dictatorship, when mobilising for the war and persecuting the Jews, could rely upon broad support from non-Nazi groups in Austrian society, especially among the traditional German nationalists and the Catholic conservative middle classes and peasants, as well as from considerable segments of the working classes. Many of them were attracted by the prospect of gaining the fulfilment of frustrated social and economic expectations through a war of expansion and the extermination policy. Nazism was in reality never based exclusively on its militant activists, party members and followers of its manifold sub-organisations. It always depended as well upon unspoken or partial support from the great masses of the German 'master race', or at least on the absence of opposition. At the climax of Nazism's power in 1943, no less than 693,000 persons living in the territories of the enlarged Austrian *Reichsgaue*¹² or roughly 30 percent of all politically active male Austrians had formally joined the Nazi party. This was a higher membership rate than in most parts of the so-called 'Old Reich' area. These figures alone may explain why denazification would become such a difficult task after 1945 and why Austrian society has kept so many Nazi or para-Nazi traits alive.

Considering all circumstances, social protest and political resistance were not widespread in Austria during the Nazi period. A simple comparison of figures demonstrates how unequal resistance and regime support had been distributed among Austrians: about 100,000 persecuted resistance fighters stood against more than six times as many Nazis inside the boundaries of modern Austria.¹³ Even the stone monuments and remains from this period show this asymmetry: on the one hand, the granite outer walls, entrance gates and the rotting wooden inmate barracks of the concentration camp of Mauthausen with over four dozen branch camps where about

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200,000 victims of Nazism from all of Europe (only about 2,000 of them were Austrian 'political prisoners') had been interned, and nearly half of them died or were murdered.¹⁴ At least these sites have become places of official anti-Nazi commemoration since the 1960s.¹⁵ On the other hand, the numerous war memorials in every village and town celebrating the Austrians killed in action for '*Heimat*, people and fatherland' rarely distinguish between the First and Second World Wars; they often list for commemoration the *Waffen SS* men killed in battle as well.¹⁶ Only since the late 1980s has a growing sense of awareness of this disproportionate presentation of the collective memory and serious attempts to build monuments for the victims of Nazism been observed. Only now is a major monument for the murdered Jews going to be erected in Austria.

The Nazi regime dissolved Austria as a coherent political and administrative unit, deprived Vienna of its capital functions, first replaced the name '*Österreich*' by '*Ostmark*' and soon thereafter, as an expression of the Third Reich's intention to extinguish all memories of Austria, forbade even the use of the word '*Ostmark*' or any other unifying word. But as a matter of fact the administrative sub-divisions of the country, the *Länder*, were so firmly embedded in people's habits, in everyday communications, in the areas of competence of the various bureaucracies, and in the mentality of the Austrian Nazi leadership itself, that after 1938 the German centralists were able to change the regional administrative structures only to a marginal degree. These effects of Nazism lasted only seven years.

The non-Jewish elites in business and many areas of cultural life managed to retain their positions. This is true even considering the abolition of all the 'Christian corporatist' organisations, which were replaced by similar bodies within the Nazi system, and the replacement of those holding top positions in politics and state bureaucracy.¹⁷ There was a real change from the first year of Nazism in Austria. The integration into the Nazi 'new social order' made Austria emerge very differently from the Third Reich; which proved for many individual Austrians so disastrous. It also eroded the privileges of the upper classes which had survived the first Republic, and changed some of the traditional restrictions of a class society which in 1938 still retained many traces of its 'feudal' past.

The most severe and long-lasting consequences on the shape of Austria's society and economy resulted from the persecution and annihilation of the Jews. Large-scale theft of Jewish property, called 'aryanisation', preceded the expulsion and extinction of more than 190,000 Austrian Jews, most of whom had been living in Vienna. The 'aryanisation' process deprived Austria of its large Jewish middle class as well as Jewish industrialists and bankers.¹⁸ Also taking into account the 'aryanisation' of more than 60,000 apartments, tens of thousands of work places and small businesses, to say nothing of furniture and other valuables, at least in Vienna, the expropriation of Jewish property amounted to a veritable socioeconomic 'revolution' of a magnitude the country had never experienced, either in 1918 or in 1848. Austrian society, not only Nazis proper, profited immensely from the transfer of Jewish property; according to my estimation, an amount of hundreds of billions of *Schilling* of its present value is involved, a fact which has only been acknowledged recently.

In addition, the sectors of culture and education (especially literature and journalism), the arts and sciences suffered heavily from the forced emigration and the

annihilation of the Jewish community which had been prominently represented in these professions. Here, Jewish intellectuals and artists had created much of what constitutes today Vienna's fame as a city of culture and science around the turn of the century. The 'exclusion of the Jews from society' left a lasting gap in post-1945 Austria and deprived it of a great part of its intellectual elite.

In contrast to these irreparable non-material losses, which many Austrians have preferred not to discuss for a long time, the confiscation of the considerable gold and foreign currency reserves of the Austrian National Bank has always been considered as a harmful matter in Austria after 1945. At the same time, the Third Reich's exploitation of the unused reserves of labour in Austria (before 1938), its low wage levels, natural resources and the availability of raw materials in agriculture and forestry has often been judged only as a negative effect for the Austrians, whereas all this also attracted German capital to Austria after the *Anschluss*. As a matter of fact, together with the 'aryanisation', this led to a marked German infiltration of the Austrian economy which again, in the medium term, proved unwillingly and indirectly – by the expropriation of 'German property' after 1945 – to be the foundation for one of the most important pillars of economic and social policy in the Second Republic: the nationalisation of much of the country's steel production, electric power plants and banking sector.¹⁹

The *Anschluss* brought with it a boost to the economy behind which lay the full weight of the economic and military expansionist policies of the Third Reich. It was not by chance that one of the priorities of the Third Reich was construction; its monumental functionality still serves, for instance, to bridge the central road over the Danube and to serve the main railway station in Linz, Hitler's beloved home town.²⁰ A system of *Autobahnen* (motorways) was also planned in Austria, but realised only to a small extent before the Nazi regime had to concentrate its economic resources on more direct war efforts. But thousands of Austrian families and many of the young soldiers of the democratic Austrian army are still housed in condominiums and barracks bearing the stylistic features of this time – and not at all having the past of their immediate surroundings in mind.

A further and even more concrete consequence of the economic *Anschluss* during the expansionary phase of the Third Reich was that many new enterprises, with the essential factor of hundreds of thousands of slave labourers from the occupied and controlled countries of Europe, especially from the East, were established and developed. They were of such magnitude that no small state could possibly have initiated them on the basis of its own internal economic resources. These involved the expansion of petroleum production, the iron and steel industry, hydroelectric power, and the chemical industry in particular. Especially in the province of Upper Austria, the huge steel works of the Linz 'Hermann Göring Werke' which, after 1945, were rebuilt and expanded into the state-owned 'VÖEST', were a symbol of Austria's industrial success until the 1980s, without changing the fact that many Austrians of the older generations have associated this plant with Hitler and Göring, the master of the 'Four Year Plan'.²¹ Thus, throughout Austria the number of industrial labourers, among them a large percentage of foreign work slaves, employed in large firms increased by 80 percent between 1930 and 1946 and kept growing on the newly established basis until the 1970s.²²

The acceleration of industrialisation during the Nazi period was also accompanied by a marked orientation of the Austrian economy towards the West, the further development of the country's tourist industry (specifically adapted to meet wartime needs until 1945), and the encouragement of mechanisation and increased production in agriculture. The relative shift towards the West, which the economy underwent between the censuses of 1934 and 1951, was one factor behind the decrease in the share of the population within the three eastern federal provinces by 8 percent until 1951 (Vienna, Lower Austria and *Burgenland* which had comprised together 54.5 percent of Austria's population before 1938). This contrasts with a slight increase in the southern parts of Austria, Carinthia and Styria, by 1.8 percent, and a considerable growth in the western *Länder* (Upper Austria, Salzburg, Tyrol and *Vorarlberg*) by 5.2 percent.²³

During the subsequent history of the Second Republic, these remaining trends resulted not only in important sociological changes, but also affected the voting patterns and the growth of federalism. One could even say that the Austrian provinces underwent a 'modernisation',²⁴ which also meant that the structural contrasts between provinces (*Länder*) and the metropolis (Vienna) became less and less pronounced. On the other hand Vienna became provincialised, a burden that has often been overlooked by Austrian politicians and historians. From the standpoint of fifty years of Austrian postwar politics, this fact may, at least partly, account for the reduction of the intense sociopolitical conflicts which had led to the breakdown of the First Republic.

In particular, as I have pointed out, the Nazi period speeded up the reorientation and change of the country's society and economy, which had not progressed much after 1918, and made it possible for post-1945 Austria to overcome the structural deficiencies of the original rump state remaining from the Habsburg Empire.²⁵ Thus, what I wish here to call the *Anschluss paradox* occurred: the pre-1938 *Anschluss* tendencies, which had been caused not least by the economic and social weaknesses of the First Republic, could be surmounted only after the Nazi version of *Anschluss* had altered most preconditions of Austria's earlier inclination towards a mythical past and the powerful German protector. Equally, the experience of German dominance ended by strengthening the Austrians' self-confidence.²⁶

National Identity and the 'Victim Myth'

At the turning point of the Second World War a kind of anti-Nazi and even stronger anti-German consensus developed among a growing, but still limited number of Austrians.²⁷ This is true especially for the leaders and functionaries of the former Christian-Socials and 'Austro-fascists' as well as for the communist activists in the underground, but also for the many Social Democrats. Thus, a kind of anti-fascism²⁸ and anti-Germanism became the common denominator of the new political beginnings immediately after the fall of the Third Reich. However, fascism was considered differently according to personal experience and political convictions. The former Christian-Socials pointed to the essential differences between 'Austro-fascism' and National Socialism; but followers of the *Heimwehr*, remaining without a proper successor organisation, had mainly turned to the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), if they had not become Nazis.

The differences between 'Austro-fascism' and Nazism were obvious not only for Jews and other 'racial enemies' but also for those who had been persecuted for political reasons by the Nazis. The 'Austro-fascists' had been the masters in the preceding authoritarian rule; for them, anti-fascism did not make sense and, at best, could only be anti-Nazi. Non-Jewish Social Democrats who, in general, had suffered under both Austrian dictatorships and sometimes had been even to a higher degree political victims of the 'Christian corporate state' saw matters differently; for them, both versions of dictatorial rule looked rather similar and they accepted the Austro-Marxist criteria of 'fascism'. The communists, following the lines of the pre-war Communist International and the slogans of the 'People's Front' against Nazism, put a universal anti-fascism at the centre of their political agenda for the immediate post-1945 order. But, in the Austrian case, where 'Austro-fascism' preceded and opposed the Nazi dictatorship, they had joined forces against 'Clerical-fascism' and included them in their vision of a 'people's front', exculpating them from fascism. Thus, in the Austrian case, anti-fascism beyond anti-Nazism had few adherents among all major political 'camps' and could hardly be a more than a phrase and political rhetoric. This fact, together with the mass support for Nazism, might explain why, in contrast to Italy or Yugoslavia,²⁹ Austria lacked any significant sign of a revolutionary anti-fascist movement.

Moreover, the Soviet army immediately after reaching Austrian territory inhibited activities like those of the weak, but politically overarching Austrian resistance movement OE and relied totally on the restoration of the former non-pan-German and non-Nazi parties. Later in 1945, the Western Allies also admitted and re-established the former political forces,³⁰ i.e. the Social Democrats, the former Christian-Socials and members of the 'Fatherland Front' of the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg era (which formed the ÖVP) and the communists (who were expected but failed to gain a much higher following than they had had in the period of illegality after 1933). These three political parties, in fact, were the main forces shaping the revived Austrian republic.

As has been reported in many memoirs and oral accounts, Austrian politicians had started relatively early to discuss the future of their country after the foreseeable fall of the Third Reich.³¹ There seems to be a true nucleus in many narratives about the rebirth of the Austrian consensus as far as the surviving prisoners of concentration camps like Dachau and Buchenwald are concerned. Taken at face value, such a historical interpretation was not totally wrong, but in hindsight this consensus is rather a retroprojection. Nevertheless, in the course of the Second Republic, such perspectives at least grounded Austria's national identity and political stability on a widely accepted political myth.³² Similar views had been expressed by resistance groups, especially by the communists, and especially by Austrians in exile.³³ At least on the surface, a spirit of mutual forgiveness between the political left and the conservative right was often expressed.

The common denominator of such a 'consensus of the camp road', which was particularly emphasised during the 1950s, was the independence of Austria from Germany and Austrian patriotism; the deep political fragmentation, which had led to civil war and opened the doors for Nazism, should be overcome through cooperation by all anti-Nazi parties and by minimising political conflict. It was considered that the First Republic had been doomed to failure because 'The Christian-Socials were good

Austrians, but bad democrats. The Austrian Socialists were good democrats, but bad Austrians³⁴ as the communist intellectual Ernst Fischer said.

Immediately after 1945, besides some attempts in the US occupation zone, former *Heimwehr* fascists and functionaries of the Dollfuss dictatorship were hardly investigated or even punished³⁵ for what they had done in the 1930s. Nevertheless, under the surface many Social Democrats were not able to forget the ‘Austro-fascists’ acts of violence, breaking of the constitutional law, and having taken economic and professional advantage of the oppression of their political opponents between 1933 and 1938. On the other hand their conservative opponents for a long time did not trust that their partners in the coalition government had really given up class struggle and Marxist ideas.³⁶ Thus, the mutual wish to control the opponent-partner by embracing him tightly became an additional motivation for the formation and continuation of the Great Coalition government until 1966.

The most decisive impulse for the rebirth of the idea of an independent Austria came from the side of the Allied Great Powers. In 1938, they had tacitly accepted the *Anschluss*, but had begun making plans for the future of Germany as the fortunes of war turned in their favour.³⁷ It was the ‘Moscow Declaration’ of 1 November 1943, which announced their intention (my italics) ‘that Austria, the first free country to fall a *victim* to Hitlerite aggression, shall be *liberated* from German domination’ and ‘that they wish to re-establish a *free and independent* Austria’. Through this, the Austrian people ought to find a way to ‘*political and economic security* which is the only basis for lasting peace’. But they added: ‘Austria is reminded, however, that she has *responsibility* which she cannot evade for participation in the war on the side of Hitlerite Germany, and that in the final settlement account will inevitably be taken of her *own contribution* to her liberation’.³⁸

The italicised words above also outline the kind of implicit minimum consensus among the founders of the Second Republic, who started to meet shortly after the Soviet army had liberated the major part of Vienna and to reconstruct their former party organisations. In their former political careers they were functionaries of the two big pre-1933/38 parties who had hibernated through Nazism inside the country and communists who had returned with the Red Army from their exile mostly in Moscow. Practically all of them had already been politically active before the Nazi era. Besides Chancellor Karl Renner, they had not belonged to the top politicians of the pre-1938 period, or had withdrawn from active politics earlier. Also trade union functionaries were among the first to meet and revive the idea of a unified ÖGB which could strongly participate in the politics of the early years of the Second Republic. In contrast to the time before 1934 and 1938, the Catholic Church did not return to the political arena as a direct political factor.

Leaders of these organisations shifted the points of future Austrian politics, even before the Second Republic was officially founded. Under the auspices of the Russians, they decided to cooperate and issued a proclamation of Austria’s independence on 27 April 1945. In this and other documents, they repeated and emphasised the promises in the first sentences of the Moscow Declaration but only quoted ‘dutifully’ the last sentence (about Austria’s responsibility) which later was often totally omitted.³⁹ Thus they refounded the Austrian state even before the capitulation of the Third Reich, and paved the way, together with other factors, for the

re-establishment of the unity of the country. But they also laid the foundations on which the myth of Austria as a 'victim of Nazism' could flourish until the recent past. The very same day they also formed a provisional government under Renner (SPÖ) who had already been the first head of government in 1918.

Reconstruction of the State, Inconsistent Denazification and Continuities

The treatment of the Austrians by the Allied occupation forces was inconsistent, varying according to occupation zones, and was not always in accordance with the Moscow Declaration. Especially in many eastern regions, which were liberated after heavy fighting, the Soviet troops behaved like conquerors. Brutal incidents, as well as the authoritarian style of democratic reconstruction and the 'automatic' arrests of former Nazi functionaries, especially in the American zone, confirmed many Austrians in their views that the liberation by the Allied armies was a new form of occupation.⁴⁰ Therefore, given the broad support and consensus Nazism had had in Austria, in popular historic memory as well as in many scholarly writings, the term 'the period of occupation' has become the common label for the years of 1945 through 1955, whereas the Nazi dictatorship is often called just the '*Anschluss* period'.

In the course of the summer of 1945, the Allied powers divided the Austrian *Länder* as well as Vienna into four occupation zones. They formed a joint Allied military government and imposed upon the Austrian government a severe control system (First Control Agreement). Remarkably enough, the Viennese government succeeded in retaining the loyalty of the western and southern provinces and announced parliamentary elections at the end of the year. The election results were a surprise: the KPÖ won only 5 percent of the vote and the two other parties remained by far the strongest ones, as they had been before 1933, but in reverse order.⁴¹

In the spring of 1945, the first political steps taken by the new Austria aimed at making a break with the Nazi era and re-establishing continuities with the First Republic on the level of politics and public law. The NSDAP and its associated organisations were outlawed on 8 May 1945 and every kind of pro-Nazi activity was forbidden. The former Nazis and activists of the SS and SA had to register in preparation for the process of denazification. They had to leave positions in offices and private businesses and lost the right to vote.⁴²

The Austrian constitution of 1920, in its reformed version of 1929, was adopted immediately. The remainder of the Austrian legal system was enforced step by step. But the Second Republic retained, for instance, the Nazi law regarding the 'church-tax', and the old-age pension scheme for workers introduced in Austria in 1939.

The territory of Austria was exactly the same as before 1938. This decision caused severe disappointment among ardent Austrian patriots when they recognised after several years that Austria would not regain even the overwhelmingly German-speaking parts of South Tyrol, which had been ceded to Italy after the First World War. On the other hand, Austria also did not have to cede the Slovene-speaking border regions of Carinthia to Yugoslavia, which were claimed by Tito with Stalin's support until 1948.

Along the same lines of continuity, the state symbols were either taken over from the First Republic (the red-white-red flag), or newly invented like the text of the

national anthem. The state seal and the escutcheon were also readopted, though with some changes. Since 1945 they picture a single-headed eagle with the symbols of the bourgeoisie, a town wall crown, the workers, a hammer, and the farmers, a sickle, just as in the First Republic. But, in order to symbolise the liberation from Nazi rule, the eagle's legs display a new element: the parts of a broken chain.⁴³ Leaving out of consideration the recently growing number of commemorative tablets, inscriptions or publicly marked sites, big monuments commemorating resistance and oppression during the Nazi regime, until the 1990s, were not frequent in Austria. But there is the important memorial site at the former concentration camp of Mauthausen, and smaller memorials at many branch camps, all of them commemorating the aspects of oppression and very few also the collaboration during the Nazi regime; this applies also to the heatedly discussed Holocaust monument of Rachel Whiteread which is under construction in Vienna. Two earlier monuments of Austria's liberation or rebirth are really publicly visible: the stereotype liberating Soviet soldier on the column on Schwarzenberg, and the Monument against War and fascism by Alfred Hrdlicka (1988), both in Vienna. In Austria, there is no single example of the German type of church ruin commemorating the bombings during the War. Most war damages have been repaired and, thus, making also the event publicly invisible.

It seems as if in the first few months after the defeat of Nazism, everyday life and political and economic administration had surprisingly little difficulty in coping with such a massive break in the political system. It also relatively easily came to terms with the sometimes chaotic interference of rival political and occupation forces, which certainly increased the feeling of uncertainty under the double administration – Austrian versus Allied – which was slowly overcome after 1947. Nevertheless, in 1945 most Austrians, with the obvious exception of Jews, Gypsies and the small group of active political opponents, continued life in the same way as they had done earlier. They showed partial conformity, partial resistance and much indifference, and they wished they could have been spared the fear, the ever-changing need for a guilty conscience, and what were undoubtedly the terrible hardships of 1945 and the next few years of crisis.

This unveils the real problem of denazification and explains why it could only be partially successful.⁴⁴ Certainly, as far as Austria was concerned, the problem was not so much the absence of a political willingness. Rather there existed two closely related and unsolvable dilemmas: the first was linked to the general problem of a return from dictatorship to democracy. It was an inherent contradiction to democratise a country without pre-existing democratic institutions. As much as possible of the rules of legality and civil rights had to be retained as this change aimed to be a democratic one. One has to admit that the founders of the Second Republic were in part aware of this dilemma, even if they do not seem to have very much cared for it. The second dilemma concerned the high Nazi party membership rates among certain professional groups in the public sector and in business. No drastic personnel changes were possible in 1945, as their expertise and skills were indispensable for establishing the new order and making possible the economic recovery. This was particularly true in those occupations controlling the legal and administrative systems, in education and in the specialised fields of production. Admittedly the extent to which denazification was carried out varied greatly from one profession and one region to the other. In general, however, it would appear that with the exception of the two changeover years of 1938

and 1945, when higher positions were subject to radical purges, the bureaucracies saw no drastic turnover of staff whatsoever.

The processes of denazification in 1945 and 1947 revealed that about 14 percent of all adult Austrians had been Nazis. Especially high percentages of Nazi party members were found among academics, professions such as physicians and attorneys (38 percent), public employees (38 percent), private employees (29 percent) and farmers (26 percent).⁴⁵ It seems that around 80 percent of schoolteachers and 70 percent of university professors had been Nazis. 75 percent of the police had to be dismissed (many of them were replaced by communists in the Soviet zone) and half of all judges and attorneys general were purged because they had served under Nazi laws. Less severe was the situation in the sector of private businesses.⁴⁶ In 1945, a total of 270,000 Nazis had been employed in Austria. About half of them were dismissed by mid-1946, but in the course of the amnesty many of them were soon re-employed, in their former or in similar positions.

Over the years a total of 55,000 Nazis were arrested and many of them interned in Glaserbach (near Salzburg) and other internment camps. When they were released, most of them returned, by no means 're-educated' but integrated into an unofficial network of the *Glaserbacher*. Newly established 'people's courts' convicted 13,600 former Nazis. Forty-three individuals were given death penalties, of which thirty were carried out. Already in 1946 and 1947, small groups of Nazis tried to re-establish a new Nazi organisation, but were soon brought under control by the anti-Nazi legislation.

In the parliamentary elections of 1949, the former Nazis were free to vote again. During the subsequent years most of them were granted full amnesty and were reintegrated into Austrian society. This was partly a side effect of the Cold War which exchanged the Nazi question for anti-communism in the West. As frequent estimations believe, one third of the ex-Nazis were absorbed into the ÖVP, one third joined as sympathisers of the SPÖ, and one third formed the core of the 'League of Independents' (Verband der Unabhängigen – VdU) which was indeed a collection of ex-Nazis. However, this organisation also attracted a certain number of liberals and protest votes from the non-political elements. Even though the VdU and its 12 percent share of votes disintegrated in 1956, its appearance indicated that the traditional 'Third Power'⁴⁷ in Austria's political system, pan-Germanism, had survived. It continued in a reduced and changed manner under the title of the 'Freedom Party of Austria' (FPÖ).

The 'Longue Durée' of the Nazi Heritage

After 1947, Austria gradually re-emerged as a subject of international law. Through the flexibility in negotiations by political leaders between the two opponents in the Cold War, and with the consensus about foreign policy existing between the ÖVP and the SPÖ, Austria could overcome the most critical period until the death of Stalin in 1953. Even if the negotiations for a peace treaty with the four Great Powers – the Austrian diplomats spoke consistently of a state treaty – were nearly frozen during these years, Austria could gradually weaken the remaining restraints on her sovereignty. Austria could even join the Marshall Plan and the Western economic order, without strong

objections from the Soviet Union. Thus Austria could profit from massive economic support. She received the highest amount of funding per capita among all the nations being included into the European Recovery Programme and therefore experienced remarkable economic growth. In a period of diplomatic thaw, while secret preparations to include Austria in the new NATO pact were underway, the Soviet Union gave up its blockade against negotiations concerning Austria's future. Finally, on 15 May 1955 the State Treaty⁴⁸ could be signed. It guaranteed Austria's independence and integrity, stated a prohibition of a future *Anschluss* with Germany and obliged Austria to thwart all forms of Nazi activities. The unofficial price paid for full sovereignty was assurance of a permanent military neutrality.⁴⁹ This was declared as 'voluntary' by Austria following the withdrawal of the four occupational armies.

During the following decades, and during the changing phases of Austria's foreign policy until the early 1990s, neutrality remained almost unquestioned among the political elites. It even became an important element of the self-image of the Austrians, as has been proven by several opinion polls. In the early 1990s, 80 percent of a representative sample agreed to the question 'Neutrality is an essential part of the idea of the Austrian state' (whereas only 12 percent disagreed). Already in the late 1970s, in contrast to earlier self-images and 'historic missions', Austrians preferred to live in a small state (78 percent versus 18 per cent who preferred to be part of a great power). A large majority defined Austria's international role as a 'bridge between East and West' (75 percent yes) and as a 'neutral zone of peace between the blocks of power' (75 percent yes).⁵⁰ Only in the 1990s did this image start to change deeply again.

This clearly indicates that neutrality has been made an integral part of Austrian national identity during the Second Republic. Even if present-day Austrians feel strongly sympathetic and kindred to the Germans, they have turned away from ideas of interwar *Anschluss* and pan-Germanism.⁵¹ These signs are indicated by opinion research data. They show an increase of Austrian patriotism, only 49 percent in 1956 to more than 90 percent in the 1990s. Correspondingly the percentage of those feeling themselves as belonging to the German 'cultural' nation declined. Displaying a kind of atavistic national pride, Austria's citizens have developed since the 1970s a marked national identity as Austrians. This is certainly a direct result of the learning process the Austrians underwent during the course of post-1945 history.⁵²

This – compared to most other European nations – late nation-building process has certainly been supported by Austria's economic success and by social policies since the beginning of the 1950s. Especially until the 1980s Austria's economy went through a long period of reconstruction and growth. In this respect Austria does not differ very much from Western Germany,⁵³ a country to which it is linked to by close monetary, economic and cultural ties, especially since the 1960s.

Nazism had fundamentally altered the basis of Austria's political culture. Thus, the Second Republic has enjoyed a remarkable freedom from political violence and strikes. There is no doubt that, until 1999, the political system of post-1945 Austria had to a very high degree been characterised by stability. The balance of power in parliament has not seriously fluctuated, and the share of seats enjoyed by the two strongest parliamentary parties until the late 1980s was always very high. The recruitment of *Nationalrat* members has been a relatively continuous process. Only the period around 1966 showed a clear generational gap within the Parliament.⁵⁴ Finally, the Republic's

constitution – taken, as is well known, from the First Republic – has not often been questioned and has not been subjected to any fundamental alterations. Even if the composition of the governments varied sometimes, the idea of party cooperation in different kinds of grand coalition governments was dominant in practical politics for decades. Thus there existed a long-lasting division of political and economic power among the major political forces linked with proportional distribution of posts in the bureaucracies and in the state-owned corporations, since the 1950s underpinned by the system of social partnership outside the sphere of politics. But in the late 1990s, after the end of global bipolarity and under the impact of the integration of the country into the European Union and 'globalisation', this system showed signs of the coming change of 2000: the formation of the 'black-blue' coalition government which marks, as late as it is, the end of the postwar period in Austria.

This institutional framework for conflict resolution on the economic and social political level was a highly developed model of cooperative, non-confrontational decision making, dealing with most major issues in economic and social policy. Usually, decisions were negotiated through settlements by representatives of the opposing economic interests, mainly the Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Agriculture on the one hand, and the Chamber of Labour and the ÖGB on the other. The degree of unification and centralisation enjoyed by these interest organisations in the Second Republic was to a large extent also an outcome of the periods of authoritarianism. Each partner in the main body of the social partnership, the Parity Commission, had (and to some extent still has) equal weight in the decision-making process. These decisions were mediated from case to case by the government and took place outside public control. They were based upon the consensus that the opposing partners in this 'class struggle' through negotiation voluntarily observed certain formal procedures and stuck to certain principles of economic distribution without any written system of rules and regulations.⁵⁵ The Austrian social partnership system has been quite rightly considered the central sociopolitical institution in the Second Republic.⁵⁶

This long-lasting stability of social partnership may be explained also by the political psychology at work. An 'enlightened', consensus-oriented political elite has found full allegiance among the (socially and educationally) lower and middle classes. It is also benefiting directly from the depoliticising experiences of these groups and their attitudes towards authority as it was before 1945, attitudes which have survived as the 'para-Nazi substratum'⁵⁷ of Austrian society and politics. The high degree of electoral and trade union involvement, shown by the Austrians until the late 1980s, was not necessarily the product of strong democratic maturity but rather of scepticism towards democratic institutions and fear of the authorities; thus, many Austrians kept following the orders or wishes of their superiors. Only the appearance of a Green party in the 1980s and the short-lived Liberals which split off from the FPÖ in the early 1990s, together with the rise of populism in the form of Haider's FPÖ,⁵⁸ indicated the weakening of this Austrian consensual system.

Discontinuity with Nazism on the level of the political system and within the political elites corresponded to strong continuity of basic political attitudes on the part of the masses, which had their roots in the period 1934–8 and 1938–45.

It was not only in the years of 1946 to 1948 that the inhabitants of the British and US zones in Vienna agreed by 51 to 27 percent when asked if they believed 'that

Nazism was ... a good idea, which was only badly executed'. Also, for instance, in 1976, another representative opinion study revealed that 21 percent of the Austrians were prepared to agree to the statement: 'that one politician alone should be in charge', and an even higher number thought 'that some nations are inferior and others are superior' (23 percent and 16 percent respectively). Many also suggested repression of 'dangerous political opponents' through imprisonment (20 percent), banishing them (16 percent), or bringing them to their senses by putting them under pressure (9 percent).⁵⁹ Again, in 1992, the 'authoritarian potential' in Austria was calculated at 48 percent of the population, and the potential of German national sentiments still amounted to 34 percent. Some 32 percent were 'anxious about strangers' and 20 percent 'felt alienated'.

Equally disquieting were the findings of public opinion research about anti-Semitism, even if these results are often questionable and sometimes interpreted in an impressionistic way. On the whole they are related to political incidents throughout the decades since 1945.⁶⁰ Anti-Semitic prejudices have been kept alive, even if there might be slight tendencies of a growing awareness of the 'impossibility' of anti-Semitism after the Holocaust and/or of replacing the earlier main target of xenophobia – the 'Jew' – by others, such as the 'Gypsies' or the 'Turks'. Thus, in the 1970s and 1980s 8 to 10 percent of the population might have been 'hardcore anti-Semites' who admitted that they felt physical disgust shaking hands with Jews.⁶¹ Consequently, flagrant anti-Jewish statements among Austrian politicians, verbal and sometimes physical attacks against Jews, and acts of vandalism against Jewish symbols and gravestones have occurred from time to time, even if these incidents were less violent and frequent compared with present-day Germany. They have alternated with anti-Jewish allusions in the mass media and in political propaganda. Scandalous indeed were the anti-Semitic statements in the closed-door meetings of the first Austrian governments.⁶² On the surface, there was an 'anti-Semitism without anti-Semites',⁶³ but whenever wilful control of emotions was overwhelmed, plain anti-Semitism came to the surface. The 'front stage' of the inner Austrian self turned easily outward and revealed the anti-Semitic 'back stage'.⁶⁴ This was particularly the case during the Waldheim affair in the second half of the 1980s.

Thus, the eagerness for restitution of 'aryanised' Jewish properties and possessions by the Austrian government has remained very reluctant and restricted until 1998 when external moral pressure, especially from the USA was put on Austria. In contrast to the Federal Republic of Germany,⁶⁵ Austria has refused to pay summary compensations to Israel as she presented herself as 'Nazism's first victim',⁶⁶ and Austria even resisted and delayed for a long time individual compensations for Austrian Jews.⁶⁷ The main line of argument, that Jews and Austrians had been in the same situation, both are victims of Nazism,⁶⁸ culminated during and after the 1986 election campaign for Kurt Waldheim's presidency.⁶⁹ But his notorious utterance 'During the war I did nothing different than hundreds of thousands of other Austrians; namely, doing my duty as a soldier' indicated the strong undercurrents in many Austrians' collective memory contradicting the democratic surface and the 'victim' thesis. Jörg Haider's notorious sayings are referring to and reinforcing this mental substratum. This is true even if, as an unintended positive result, the Waldheim controversy and the activities of public commemoration fifty years after 1938 had

caused a partial redefinition of Austria's self-image; thus, the Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky for the first time could admit in the Austrian Parliament in 1991 that 'many Austrians had greeted the *Anschluss* ... and participated in repressive measures and acts of persecution of the Third Reich, in part in leading positions ...'.⁷⁰

Anti-Semitic and xenophobic prejudices have been more or less widespread among Austrians of all age groups, classes and regions. They were stronger among Catholic conservatives than among Social Democrats, who displayed strong tendencies of protectionism against a foreign labour force and whose rank and file as well as leaders also displayed anti-Semitic prejudices. But they are markedly strongest among the followers of the FPÖ. Especially since Haider took over the party leadership in 1986, the FPÖ has shifted from traditional German nationalism and liberal positions towards the extreme political right. Haider's populism, his verbal aggressiveness and provocations,⁷¹ and his often more than ambiguous statements about Nazism, the 'foreigners' and the Austrian nation have been honoured by his steadily growing electorate until 1999. They seem to express the remaining (or growing) resentments against the post-1945 elites, the official political values and the existing democratic system, and it was exactly this that had caused concern among many Western politicians as the Haider FPÖ has been attacking the anti-Nazi consensus of the European Union.

Even more disturbing than this phenomenon itself is the fact that inside Austria such a mentality met only a temporally and politically limited resistance. The 'writing on the wall' could be the formation of an ÖVP-FPÖ-coalition government and the fact that the political heirs of the old Catholic conservatism abandoned their earlier anti-Nazi traditions. But the growth of the FPÖ had also strongly profited from the decline of the former party loyalties, the preceding petrification of the traditional parties, the interest organisations and the party system as a whole.⁷² It also profited from the ideas of the 'limits of the social welfare state' and the worldwide turn towards economic and social individualism. But it mainly benefits from the spread of xenophobia linked with the opening of the borders to Eastern Europe after the disintegration of the communist regimes, from the open support of the most influential tabloid newspaper (*Neue Kronen-Zeitung*), and from indulging feelings of social insecurity. In the mid-1990s, Haider openly aimed at introducing a severe change in the Austrian political system: a 'Third Republic'.⁷³ The rise of the FPÖ made Haider the most successful right-populist leader and became an ominous example in Europe.⁷⁴ Haider's rhetoric and electoral success might be considered, at least in part, as a late revelation of Austria's deficient dealings with its Nazi past and the loss of the legitimising belief in Austria's long-lasting 'lie of living' – the 'victim' myth – and as the 'revenge' of Austria's lasting authoritarian or para-Nazi heritage. This might reveal that many problems had been left unresolved under the surface of the 'success story' of fifty years of the Second Republic.

Summary

Like many other European states which had passed through periods of dictatorial rule in the twentieth century, Austrians experienced two kinds of dictatorship, the authoritarian '*Ständestaat*' ('Austro-fascism') and the post-*Anschluss* Nazi regime.

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The later – being much more severe – had caused the deeper breaks and in part stronger effects in Austrian history under long-term perspectives; the earlier dictatorship was overridden by Nazism, but its legacies for post-1945 Austria were also vigorous, though less recognisable.

In the economy, Nazi anti-Jewish policy was fuelled by and brought profit to many Austrians. The persecution and extermination of Austrian Jewry amounted to the most deep-reaching ‘revolutionary’ change probably since the Counter-reformation period, it demodernised Austria (especially Vienna) culturally and mentally for decades, and together with the Third Reich’s war policy left immense permanent losses of life. The Greater-German war economy set a shift of the internal weights to the Austrian west in motion, resulted in a kind of modernisation of the Austrian economy and eased (postwar) social mobility. It led to a ‘deprovincialisation’ of the Austrian *Länder* and levelled earlier centre–periphery contrasts, and unintentionally contributed to the low conflict level and the extraordinary strong neocorporatist (social partnership) system of half a century of postwar Austria. In the latter respect, the mental roots and societal consequences of ‘Austro-fascism’ also played an important and lasting role.

Whereas the ‘*Ständestaat*’ can be attributed to the line of Austrian Catholic conservatism, Nazism belongs to the (until 1945) strong pan-German national traditions of the country, even if the Nazi regime cannot be simply and exclusively understood as either a German (external) or Austrian (internal) phenomenon: Nazism inside Austria was both. Under the label of Austrian national identity to which the ‘*Ständestaat*’ had given an important impulse authoritarianism and its corporatist, antidemocratic traditions and remains were often whitewashed. In contrast to this, pan-Germanism, having been an important factor for the growth of Nazism among Austrians, was delegitimised by the (lost) war as well as by the harsh dictatorial and anti-Austrian effects of the Third Reich. The (re)construction of democracy in Austria was to a great extent following the logic of externalisation of Nazism and minimising its autochthonous aspects, as can be demonstrated with reference to the (half-hearted and inconsequent) denazification, the lack of compensation for the persecution of Jews and other ‘racial’ or ethnic victims, and an unique (among Western political cultures) deficit of public sensibility for anti-Semitic and Nazi traits in Austrian society (e.g. ways of speaking and political argumentation, beliefs, political symbols). The political myth of Second Republic Austria as a mere ‘victim’ of Nazism (i.e. Hitler and Germany) became a crucial reference point in the (successful) process of nation building in the second half of the twentieth century and in the (less thoroughgoing) process of democratisation of Austrian society, resulting in the Austrian social partnership which was undoubtedly successful until the 1970s, but then turned out to become a factor of a certain political and societal petrification of the country.

Thus, the long-term consequences of the dictatorial phases in the 1930s and 1940s were intertwined, reinforcing or counter-balancing each other, and often had ambiguous effects and side-effects. Very generally speaking, post-1945 Austria resulted from a restoration of democracy, continuities in society and mentality, and learning processes in politics. The phenomenon of a ‘second dictatorship’ made the Austrian case complex and served often and for a long time as an excuse in thoroughly overcoming the Nazi past.

Notes

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