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# Austria Returns to the Far Right

Seventy years after the Nazi Anschluss of Austria, the government in Vienna is again being filled by those who sympathize with Adolf Hitler.

- Andrew Miiller
- 22-01-2009

The world was shocked by the results of the election; but not nearly shocked enough. On Sept. 28, 2008, two pro-Nazi parties won nearly one third of the vote in Austria's federal election. This means that between the two parties, right-wing extremists control one out of every three seats in Austria's parliament.

The election was the Austrian far-right's best performance since the end of the Second World War.

Since no party in the election received over 30 percent of the vote, talks have been under way between the two parties with the most votes, the Social Democrats and the People's Party, to form a coalition government. While a right-wing coalition of the conservatives and the two far-right groups Freedom Party and Alliance for Austria's Future was initially considered a possibility, it is now likely the far-right parties will hold the balance of power in a governing system that cannot effectively exclude them from the decision-making process.

At the time of the election, the Freedom Party was led by Heinz-Christian Strache and the Alliance for the Future of Austria was led by the infamous Austrian neo-fascist Jörg Haider. Just a couple weeks after the election, however, Haider died in a high-speed car crash. Thirty thousand mourners gathered in the southern Austrian city of Klagenfurt on October 18 to attend the funeral of a man who admired SS soldiers as men of honor and once praised Hitler's economic policies as superior to those of the current Austrian government.

Now that Haider is dead, many fear that his far-right constituency might unify with that of Strache. Haider and Strache had a personal dislike for each other, but their core beliefs were almost identical. Strache—a man who wants to repeal a law banning the use of the Nazi swastika in Austria—has already claimed to be Haider's heir in the right-wing "third camp" of Austrian politics. If Austria's two pro-Nazi parties unify in one camp, the power of Austria's centralist political parties would be greatly undermined.

The fact that a third of voters in Austria would cast a ballot for one of these two parties reveals a dangerous shift in the national mindset. "There is something rotten in the psyche of Austria that allows a protest vote against mainstream political parties to morph into an endorsement of the extreme right," wrote the *Scotsman.*

"Make no mistake," it continued. "Getting a third of a country to put their X next to the names of men who think SS soldiers were honorable, who want to deport any immigrant caught so much as shoplifting and who want to repeal a law banning Nazi imagery, takes more than mere political chicanery.

"It takes a national will. The victory for the immigrant-hating, Nazi-idealizing rightist parties on Sunday was a stunning example, if any more were needed, of this land's inability to deal with a monstrous past" (Oct. 1, 2008).

## History of the Anschluss

Especially key to understanding Austria's current shift toward right-wing extremism is the astounding fact that Austria was never effectively denazified after World War ii.

The reason for this failure in Austria's denazification was that the Soviets captured Vienna and set up an Austrian government that immediately declared its union with Germany null and void. Because of this declaration, Austria was treated by the Allies as a Nazi victim instead of a Nazi accomplice.

Yet the truth is that Austria was a central support and arch-enabler of both Nazism and the Third Reich. In fact, Austria's National Socialist Party came so close to staging it own coup d'état in early 1938 that Austrian Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg thought to defeat this conspiracy by meeting with Hitler. Instead of helping Schuschnigg, however, Hitler came down on the side of the Nazi conspirators and helped them gain control of the country. Then, when Hitler announced the annexation of Austria to the German Reich one month later, the proclamation was met with overwhelming enthusiasm from many Germans and Austrians alike.

In fact, many Austrians were more dedicated to Nazism than their German counterparts. In his book *Hitler's Austria: Popular Sentiment in the Nazi Era,* Evan Burr Burkey notes that even though they only constituted 8 percent of the Third Reich's population, Austrians comprised 14 percent of the SS and 40 percent of Nazi personnel involved in genocide.

Of course, not all Austrians were Nazi accomplices. Many heroic Austrians stood up against Hitler's evils. Yet there were also many Austrians who supported him wholeheartedly. These Nazi sympathizers were allowed to influence the political, industrial and academic landscapes of both Austria and Germany after the war.

Could this be a major reason why a third of Austria's voters can support pro-Nazi parties today?

## The Future of Europe

Problems such as economic hardships, illegal immigration and Islamic terrorism are driving more and more Austrians to extreme-right-wing politics. Yet this trend does not stop in Austria. "In Norway, the anti-immigrant Progress Party is now the largest in the land," wrote the *Independent*. "Like other right-wing parties in Scandinavia, it has enjoyed surging support since the Islamic cartoon affair two years ago. In Switzerland, Christoph Blocher's Swiss People's Party won the general election last year after a campaign condemned as racist by UN monitors. In Poland, the League of Polish Families, a member of the coalition government until a year ago, campaigns for the elimination of Jewish influence in business and the professions. The Vlaams Belang in Belgium is strongly anti-immigrant. Even in ultra-liberal Denmark, the nationalist and anti-immigrant Danish People's Party is now the third-largest party. In Italy, Silvio Berlusconi's Party of Freedom is sandwiched in the ruling coalition by the anti-immigrant Northern League and the post-fascist National Alliance" (Sept. 26, 2008).

In Germany, neo-Nazi parties like the National Democratic Party are also moving closer to the political mainstream. Even major centralist political parties like the Christian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party are taking on more right-wing views in the face of surging illegal immigration and the global economic crisis. This shift to right-wing conservatism is acting as a unifying force in the European Union as nations across the Continent take a common view on how to solve their problems.

Such a unified approach also presents the perfect scenario for a single European nation to rise up as the leader of a united continent.

Biblical passages such as Revelation 17:12-13 show that in the end time, 10 dictatorships are to rise up and give all their military power to an over-arching emperor who will resurrect the Holy Roman Empire. The late *Plain Truth* editor in chief Herbert W. Armstrong proclaimed for over 40 years that these 10 dictatorships would rise up in Europe and merge into a fascist empire dominated by Germany.

In both Austria and Italy, pro-Nazi parties already control a substantial number of parliamentary seats in their respective national legislatures. The world needs to take heed of these horrifying developments. They foreshadow both the worst and the best news anyone could ever hear. To find out about this news, request our free booklet *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire* . ▪