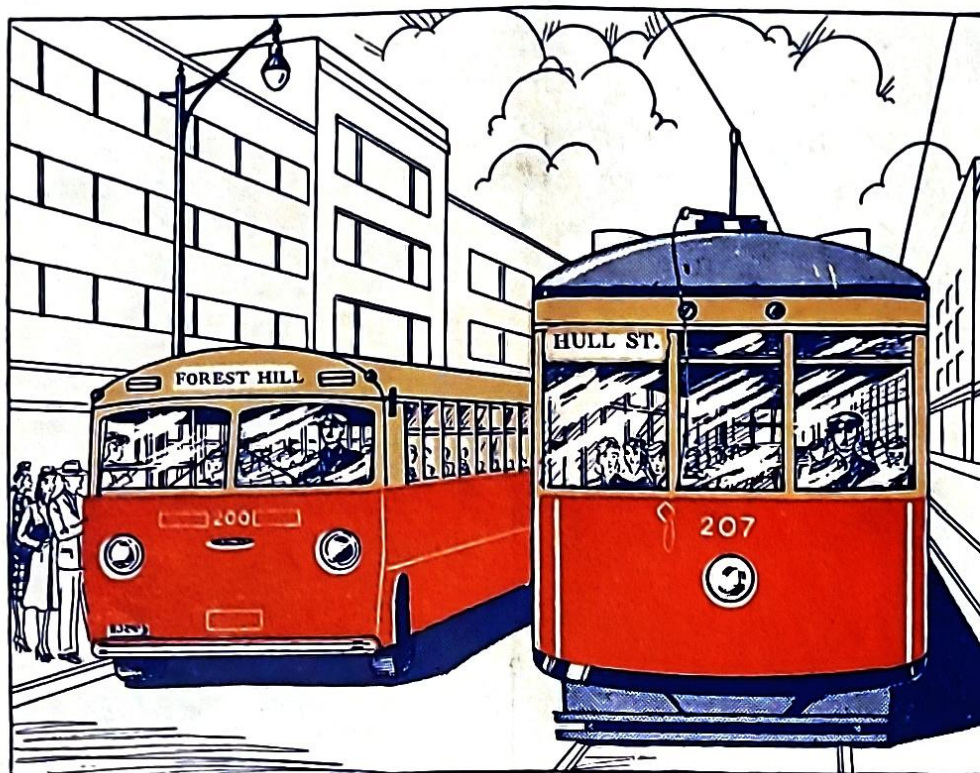


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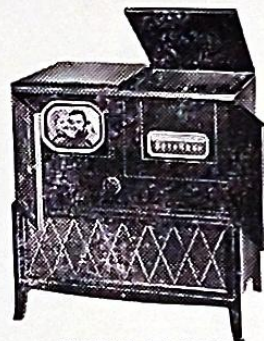
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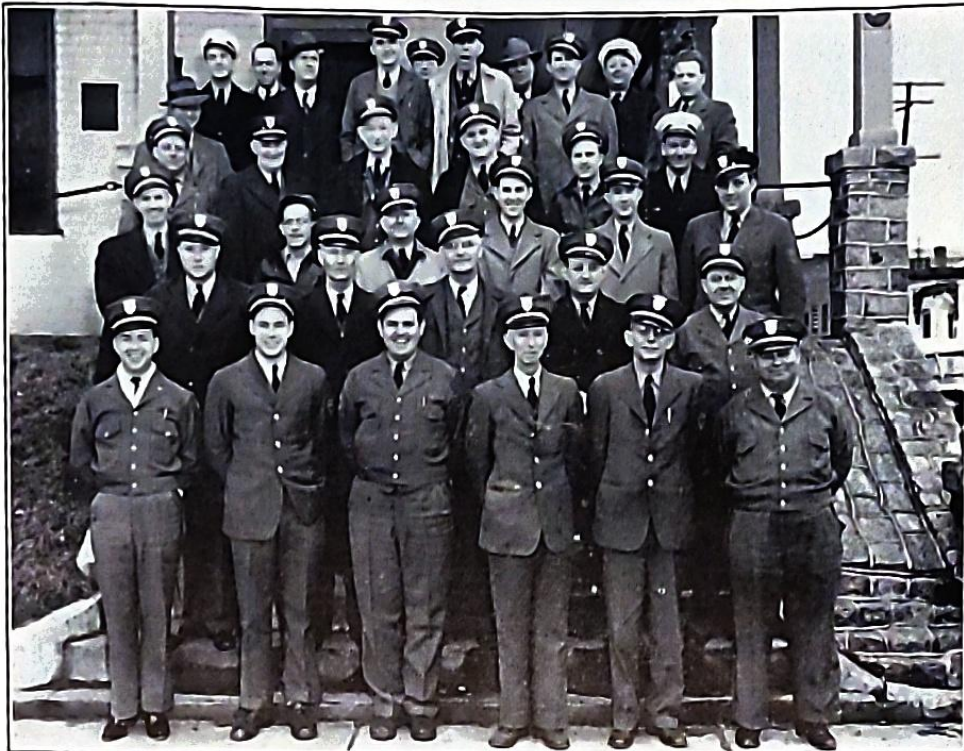
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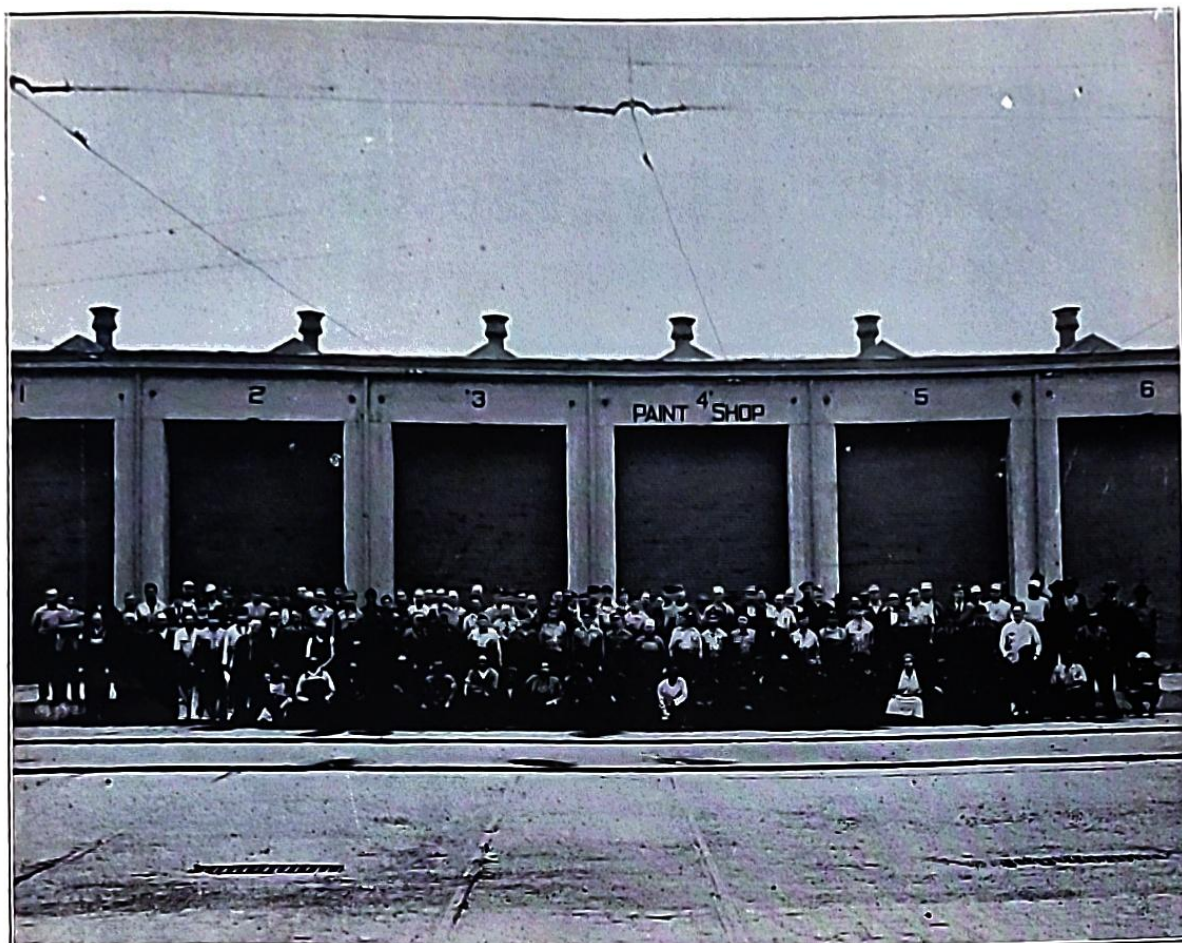
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## Austrian Workers Reject Communism

By HANS FEHLINGER

During the Nazi occupation of Austria, from March, 1938, to May, 1945, all voluntary organizations were suppressed and Austrian workers were forced to join the German Labor Front.

However, there was a resolute, courageous minority of the disbanded trade unionists who, at the risk of their lives, organized secret, underground unions. Despite Nazi persecution, these secret unions managed to stay in existence through the war.

In the spring of 1945, Nazi Germany surrendered. Leaders of the various labor groups in Austria, formerly divided according to political opinion, reached agreement upon a single Austrian labor movement.

Since 1945 the Austrian trade unions have made splendid progress. A membership of 1,230,000 was recorded as early as 1947, and by last July the total had reached about 1,400,000. The largest unions are those of the metal workers, the miners, the building and wood workers, the employes in private service, the employes in public service and the railroad workers.

Almost all Austrian workers and salaried employes eligible for membership are already enrolled in their respective trade unions. The numerical strength of the movement is impressive, but a vast amount of work remains still to be done in the way of consolidating the organizations and to acquaint union members with the meaning of the economic and social policies of the labor movement.

Of the 1,400,000 union members in Austria, Social Democrats represent about 80 per cent, Christian Democrats 10 per cent and the Communists 10 per cent. The Communists, although only a small minority, do their utmost to gain sufficient support to win positions in the local unions, these to serve as stepping-stones to higher union office.

Since the end of the war there have been relatively few stoppages of work. Both labor and employers have shown a preference for settlement of disputes over wages and working conditions around the bargaining table. The practice of making labor-management agreements applicable nationally is gaining favor.

Trade unionists in Austria are keenly desirous of establishing friendly relationships with the

(Continued on page 16)

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(Continued from page 14)

democratic labor movements abroad and learning as much as possible of their work and problems.

One of the main subjects at the convention of Austrian labor held in Vienna last May was the Marshall Plan. After full discussion, this program was endorsed by a large majority. Of course, the Communists voted against it. They charged that ERP is "an attempt to subject the whole world to the financial domination of Wall Street" and "an effort by American Big Business at the economic enslavement of mankind."

The cry of the Communists is that "capitalism is the cause of war." But what of the power expansion of Communist Russia? The masses of the Austrian workers have no illusions about the real motives and purposes of the Soviet leaders in the realm of international affairs.

Strong propagandist efforts are made by the Austrian Communists to spread the gospel of Marxism among the nation's workers. Communism is disguised cleverly. Attempts are made to give it a spiritual appeal. The Communists publish daily and weekly newspapers as well as monthly journals.

The party's paying membership is rather small. In Parliament the Communist representation is not strong enough to exert influence on either domestic or foreign policy. Under present conditions there is only one way in which the Communists can hope to obtain greater power and that is by winning the workers.

Since the end of 1947 the adherents of Stalinism have been trying to induce the workers to resist the policies of the presiding council of the Austrian Federation of Labor. For

(Continued on page 23)

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*(Continued from page 16)*

instance, after Moscow's coup in Czechoslovakia, the Austrian Communists proceeded to organize "action committees" in factories in order to mobilize the workers under Communist control.

Unauthorized strikes were called and trouble was caused by the Communists' appeals to replace the political and economic system of the West with a so-called "people's democracy" on the Soviet model. The former Communist member of the government, Dr. Altmann, predicted that this aim would be attained as soon as the Western allies could be forced to withdraw from Austria.

The cleavage between Communists and anti-Communists in Austria's unions is sharpening. The non-Communist workers are on the alert. They know Communists are unscrupulous, for it is part of the Communist faith that the end justifies the means.

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