

Austria Rejects Reds, Backs Catholic Party

Washington—(NC)—The Austrian People's Party, which represents the Catholic population of Austria and its will for independence and freedom, has won a small but clear majority in the elections of a National Assembly.

According to final returns, the 165 seats in the new Austrian parliament will be distributed as follows: Austrian People's Party, 85 seats (1,574,587 votes); Socialist Party, 78 seats (1,428,862 votes); Communist Party, 6 seats (175,671 votes).

Elections for the nine provincial parliaments were held at the same time, and since these diets name the members of the Austrian Senate, the upper chamber of the country's parliament will also have a Catholic majority.

Leopold Figl, director of the Catholic Farmer's League until 1938 and a bitter enemy of the Nazis who kept him in concentration camps for several years, will head a new coalition government.

Through some European comments runs an undertone of disappointment that the Austrian elections did not show a more definite swing to the Left. In this respect, it is pointed out by persons here familiar with the Austrian situation, it should be remembered that the Austrian People's Party is not a party of the Right, but, as its name indicates, truly a people's party.

The People's Party won its victory after a hard campaign, complicated by the fact that Austria is still rigidly divided into four zones according to the occupation of the country by Russian, American, British and French forces. Mail services between the four zones, and communications, are almost nonexistent.

At least 300,000 Austrians are still away from their home country. They were either pressed into the German armies and are now prisoners of war, most of them in Soviet Russia, or are still living in Germany as displaced persons.

Reports from Austria state that Socialists and Communists sought, under many pretexts, to prevent Catholics from freely exercising their right to vote. There are also many indications that some of the occupation au-

thorities openly or secretly abetted these efforts. Still, Austria's Catholics persisted in their determination and went to the polls in extraordinarily large numbers. Ballots were cast by about 80 per cent of those entitled to vote.

In analyzing the outcome of the election it should be remembered that between 1938 and 1945 the fury of the Nazis were turned in full on Austria's Catholics. There was not one Catholic leader who escaped imprisonment, some of them for long terms. Many did not survive the cruelties of the concentration camps.

By all means, cruel and subtle, by violence and graft, the Nazis sought to eradicate the Catholic spirit of the people. They were far more lenient toward the Socialists. (The Communists have never played any important role in Austrian affairs; this is the first time that they are represented in Parliament.)

It is a fact, rarely, if ever, mentioned by those presuming to write with authority on Austria -- that after the Nazi occupation of the country in 1938 more than one-third of the Socialists, particularly among the younger members, joined the ranks of the Nazi Party. It appears that those Austrian Nazis who could prove former membership in the Socialist Party were readily forgiven their dereliction and readmitted to the fold. Certainly, Austria's Catholics did not find such lenient treatment. But, as the results show they did not need it. Their party still enjoys the confidence of a majority of the people.

As a result of the election a considerable lessening of the political tension appears probable. The provisional government headed by the Socialist Premier, Dr. Karl Renner, had very little authority beyond the boundaries of the Russian zone of occupation. The new government will be backed by the authority of the whole Austrian nation and Allied governments will not be in a position to resume full diplomatic relations with Austria.

British Prelate Sees Lack Of Freedom in Many Nations

London—(NC)—Final peace in Europe and the world must be achieved by a more Catholic, that is, an international spirit of love, Archbishop Burnham Griffin of Westminster told a meeting here of the Council of the Spirit organization. He said "secular" education will be a barrier to reconstruction.

Speaking when he was in the recent visit to Washington, the Archbishop said that the world is now in a state of confusion and that the only way to bring about a new era of peace and freedom is by the use of the word of the Spirit, that is by the word of God.

"Thousands of people," he said, "are still being persecuted for their religious beliefs. Hundreds of thousands are in concentration camps. In many countries the secret police continue their bloody work."

"If we are to have final peace in Europe and the world, we must remove the cause of war," he said. "This can be done only by the removal of the barriers of intolerance and prejudice which separate nations and peoples. If the existence of an iron curtain separating Eastern from Western Europe.

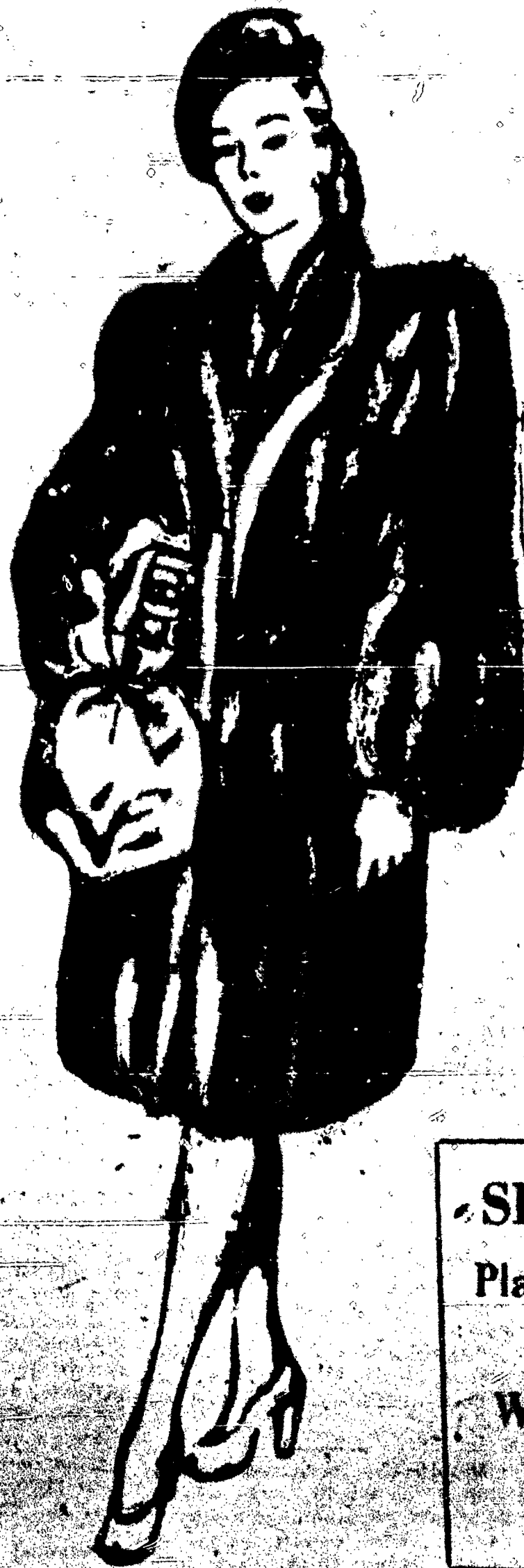
Pope's Message
Washington—(NC)—The Pope's message to the Catholics of the world, which was read in the Vatican on Dec. 7, is being widely distributed here.

The Pope's message, which was read in the Vatican on Dec. 7, is being widely distributed here. It is a message of peace and reconciliation, and it is a message of hope for the future.

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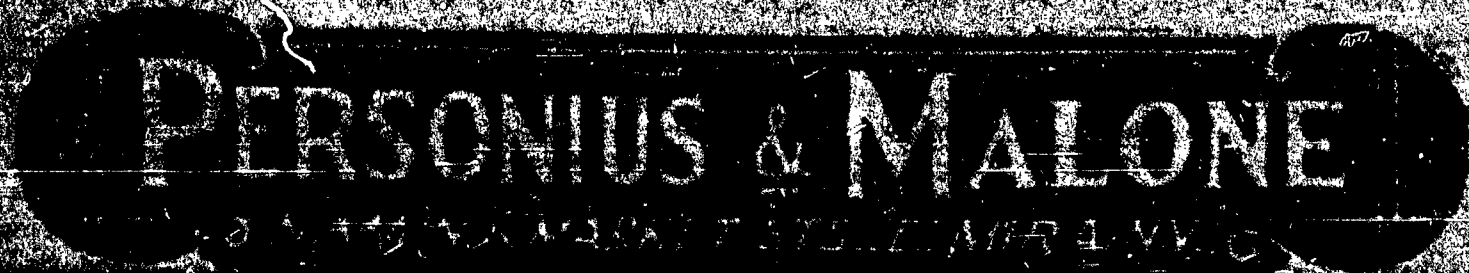
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