

VIENNA UNDER SOCIALIST RULE.

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VIENNA is the only city with millions of inhabitants that is governed by a Socialist majority. After four and a half years of office, this majority, which was secured in the year of Revolution (1918-19), has been splendidly maintained, and even increased. Whereas after the overthrow of the old order, 100 of the 165 members of the Vienna Municipal Council were Socialists, the proportion is now 78 out of 120 members.

There is no city about which so many lies have been told as about Vienna. It has been denounced as a Bolshevist centre, as a city which is being ruined by its rulers. Nevertheless the truth has prevailed. To-day municipal representatives from all parts of the world are coming to the Vienna Town Hall, in order to learn something from the Socialist administration of the city. It is therefore a most useful task to give an account of the achievements of the Socialist Town Hall of Vienna.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CITY OF VIENNA.

The Socialist Party was unable to prepare itself for the assumption of its formidable task. Although 42.85% of the votes cast in Vienna in 1911 for the parliamentary elections, under manhood suffrage, were Socialist, the Party only numbered eight representatives out of 165 in the Vienna Municipal Council, owing to the privileged franchise.

Such an uninfluential and hopeless minority could acquire no insight into the business, which was in reality conducted by a Burgomaster (the Mayor), invested with absolute powers. The 54,000 city employees and workers were engaged on the principle: "No Socialists need apply." Membership of a free (*i.e.*, Socialist) trade union was punished with dismissal. Consequently, after the Revolution the new Socialist administration had to deal either with conscious anti-Socialist employees or with slaves whose chains had just been broken. This, of course, considerably aggravated

the difficulties incidental to the assumption of government. Only a fundamental reorganisation of the municipal constitution could provide the administration with the scope which it needed, and make it the real master of the immense machine which it was called upon to operate.

The City Council.

The new city constitution is based on the following principles. The city area is divided into districts or wards. The total number of the city councillors is divided among the districts according to the number of citizens. Proportional representation is observed. Each district elects a district council, at the same time as its city councillors. The City Council elects the Burgomaster and the Aldermen, who at present number 12 persons, none of whom must belong to the Council. In addition, the City Council sets up eight committees for the eight departments of administration. The principle of proportional representation is observed in all these elections.

The more important business is decided by the City Municipal Council, while minor questions are settled by the committees. All matters which come before the Municipal Council are first discussed by the competent committee and then by the Aldermen. Apart from their functions as a standing orders committee, the Aldermen have limited independent executive functions, as have also the committees, to which are referred everything which is not expressly described in the constitution as the business of the municipal officers, of the Aldermen, or of the Municipal Council. The duties of the local district councils, which elect the district or ward chairmen, are very slight. In the main, both they and the district chairmen have only to tender advice.

Administrative Departments.

As already mentioned, the administration is divided into eight general departments, which are as follows:—

1. Staff matters and administrative organisation.
2. Finance.
3. Welfare institutions and public health.
4. Housing.
5. Works and Constructional Department.
6. Food and Stores Department.
7. General Purposes.
8. Municipal trading undertakings.

The duties of the departments may be inferred from their names. Department 7 looks after all matters that do not belong to the other departments. Education is not included in this list, as, according to Austrian legislation, educational administration is not the

immediate business of the Municipality. It devolves upon a city School Board, of which we shall hear more later.

Heads of Departments.

An administrative Alderman stands at the head of each of the eight departments. He is elected by the Municipal Council for a period of five years, and may be recalled if the Council passes a resolution of no confidence in him. The Aldermen include representatives of the minority, but only members of the majority are designated for positions as administrative Aldermen. Thus City government proper is purely Socialist. It is conducted by the Burgomaster and the administrative Aldermen, who are elected officials. They carry on the municipal business and are also the conveners and *rapporteurs* of the committee of the Municipal Council attached to their department, like British chairmen of committees but with something nearer "ministerial" powers. In the case of Department 8, the administrative Alderman is also the chairman, as the managers of the municipal enterprises are the standing *rapporteurs*.

The Burgomaster.

It is a kind of ministerial system with the Burgomaster as Premier, except that he occupies a double position. He is responsible to the Municipal Council (although in his capacity as a councillor he may be elected chairman of the Council), and he has the constitutional right in all urgent cases to settle himself business which appertains to the Council or to one of its subsidiary bodies. He is also entitled to veto resolutions of the Council or of other municipal bodies, although he very rarely makes use of this power. In the event of the Municipal Council insisting on its resolution, the Burgomaster's veto is no longer valid. He is supported by the Chief Municipal Officer, who is not elected, but is a permanent official of the Municipality. The latter is appointed by the Aldermen, on the nomination of the Burgomaster, and it is his duty to supervise the whole of the administrative activity in conjunction with the administrative Aldermen.

Under resolutions passed by the Municipal Council, particular branches of administration may be organised as commercial or public utility services. At the present time, the following services are in existence: Carriage Works, Canals, Water Supply, Baths, Cemeteries, Building Materials Works. These concerns are invested with a high degree of independence, which is still greater in the case of those enterprises which the Municipal Council recognises as business undertakings, such as Gas Works, &c. Their management is entirely separate from that of the Municipality.

Audit Office.

Independent of the municipal authorities, there exists an Audit Office, which has to control all accountancy matters relating

to the administration and business enterprises of the Municipality. It must report directly to the Burgomaster and the Municipal Council.

The above account will make it clear that the Municipal administration enjoys a wide degree of independence. It appoints its organs of management freely and independently. In pre-war times, the elected burgomaster, who then also required the Imperial sanction, was at the same time the Lord Lieutenant, that is the chief of the lowest grade of State administration in the province of Vienna. The duties of this office are now carried out by the municipal authorities, but the administrative Aldermen have no powers in this sphere.

Vienna a Province.

Since then, the federal constitution of the Republic has conferred on Vienna the status of a province. The City detached itself from the old province of Lower Austria, and became an independent constituent State of the Republic.

The Vienna Municipal Council is a Diet at the same time. The meetings of the Diet are held separately from those of the Municipal Council, although composed of the same members, under the chairmanship of its own president. The Burgomaster is also the provincial governor, that is, the chief of the provincial government, which is constituted by the Aldermen. The Municipality has taken over the duties of the former independent provincial administration, which chiefly related to welfare questions.

Vienna is thus a municipality, a political district, and a province at the same time. This is important because the Vienna Municipal Council as a Diet possesses the same rights as all the other Diets, above all the right to legislate, so far as this right is not reserved to the national Parliament. The Vienna taxes are also determined and imposed by the Municipal Council as a Diet. The State government exercises a limited veto, just as it does in the case of all the other provincial Diets.

The achievement of this comprehensive freedom and independence of Vienna is one of the greatest successes of Austrian Labour policy during the revolutionary years. It alone has made possible a Socialist municipal policy, and above all a new financial policy.

FINANCIAL POLICY.

Before the war, Vienna, in common with all the great municipalities of Austria, derived its revenue mainly from a supplement to the State House Duty. This share of the House Duty amounted to one half of the revenue of Vienna. Taxes for the State, the province, and the municipality comprised 40 per cent. of all the rents