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Vienna

First Impressions  
A Tale of Three Cities

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Dear Mr. Rogers:

The heights of the Kahlenberg provide the classical view of Vienna and are in fact the best vantage point from which to get an impression of the city in its geographical and historical context: mountains behind, steppes beyond, and the Danube to tie them all together. On my second evening here I sat at the restaurant that overlooks the city from the Kahlenberg. From there the physical extent of Vienna is apparent. The Innere Stadt of tourist, historic and waltz fame is only a fine part of the pattern of lights - not as many lights nor as symmetrical a constellation as Los Angeles offers to the view from above the Sunset Strip, but more than there had been in Leipzig or in West Berlin.

A string of barges moved up the river and under the lights of the Danube bridge that in 1953 was called the Bridge of the Red Army, but is now the Reichs Bridge again. Like many others that pass this way, this barge was coming from beyond what we call the Iron Curtain, only a few river miles to the east. I recalled that rivers and canals also allow barges to move from Leipzig to the west and from Berlin to the east, but that the Elbe, when I crossed it, was empty, and the Havel within West Berlin was full of sailboats.

The same language, or nearly the same, is spoken in West Berlin, Leipzig, and Vienna, yet they are in three different countries today. The Big Three decreed in 1918 that a reluctant Vienna should remain separate. A different Big Three built borders between West Berlin and Leipzig in 1945. I am told that Vienna has found much virtue in her independence and would now fight to keep it. But in West Berlin and in Leipzig all political pronouncements must be prefaced by an invocation to reunification.

It is with these thoughts that I link together my first impressions of the three cities that have been my reintroduction to Central Europe. Of the three, I had seen only Vienna before. If my impressions are naive, their very naivete may perhaps be instructive.

Berlin is full of surprises for an American nurtured on spies-among-the-rubble movies, but none will surpass the pleased astonishment with which one discovers its green spaciousness. 2.2 million people are crowded into the 184.5 square miles of West Berlin, with another 1.2 million in the 153.8 square miles of the Soviet Sector. Yet in the Grunewald one can walk for half an hour without seeing a house, homes in many residential areas are spaced like an American suburb, and around Glienickersee is a bit of rural Brandenburg with its villages and lakeshore cafes. From the Wannseeterassen, high above the sailboat speckled waters of the Wannsee and the Havel, only a few lakeside villas can be seen among the woods.

But reminders of West Berlin's peculiar and famous status as a western island in a Soviet sea are always at hand. On my first afternoon my Berlin host, David Binder, took me for a swim at the Glienickersee, at the southwestern edge of the British Sector. To get there one drives along Potsdamer Chaussee, a pleasant straight road through woods and farms. Every few hundred meters along the western edge of the road is a wooden sign, in English and German: "Warning! Beyond this point begins the Soviet Zone". Along the road there are frequent West German police patrols, two men with a dog. The border here is for the most part unfenced, and one does not see any Volkspolizei on the other side, but I was told: "You wouldn't walk far through those woods without being shot at, and perhaps killed."

At the Glienickersee one can picnic and swim at a charming lakeside cafe. Tables are set out in the sun and under the trees and dogs and small naked children run in and out of the water. Their owners and elders, perhaps two hundred of them, enjoy food and beer in the sun while white-jacketed waiters hurry among the tables. Running the long axis of the lake - which is perhaps a third of a mile wide and three or four miles long - is a series of buoys, so near that one can easily swim to them. They mark the Zone Border; a couple of years ago, I was told, a boy swam across and was shot. The western edge of the cafe property is an extension of this water boundary. Just beside the kitchen is a low fence of lake reeds and against this flimsy barrier is a sign: "Warning! Beyond this point begins the Soviet Zone". The dock from which children were diving into the lake is about three yards this side of the fence. Beyond it are two or three lakeside villas and then a small village, its red roofs and church steeple rising from among the trees. On this side of the reed fence well-fed Berliners sit with their beer and wurst, throwing scraps to their dogs, keeping a watchful eye on tanned babies playing in the shallow water.

The Berliner, and the American resident in Berlin, may learn to

take this intimate juxtaposition of two worlds for granted, but for the newly arrived the picture is memorable.

The distinction between the "Soviet Sector" and the "Soviet Zone" is elementary to any talk about Berlin. The East Sector of the City of Berlin is a Communist showpiece, and, with the American, British and French sectors (West Berlin, a Land of the Bundesrepublik), is still essentially part of a four-power controlled city. As such, its status is distinct from that of the former Soviet occupation zone. It is accessible, in both directions, and hence is the route through which most East Germans are making their flight to the West, since the inter-zonal border is ever more tightly closed. (East German authorities were claiming last week in Leipzig that an "outer circle" railroad around Berlin, when completed, will make it unnecessary for so many East Germans to go to East Berlin. This presumably will allow them to put a more effective curb on the flow of refugees through the Berlins.) To drive from West to East Berlin one needs only an identity card or passport and proper papers on the car; to cross by subway or intra-urban railway only the passport is required and this will not usually be checked. Sightseeing tourists and Berliners going shopping, visiting, or to the theater - or to work - make traffic heavy.

Moreover, life in East Berlin is quite different from life in the Zone, and the contrast between the two halves of the city is not nearly as sharp as it once was. Window displays are more drab in the East sector, there is less variety in goods and less neon<sup>to</sup> advertise, but altogether the East looks today much as the West must have looked five or six years ago, when reconstruction had not proceeded so far. Neon even advertises the same brand names in the East, since there is an East German "Agfa" (nationalized) to match the western one, an East German "Zeiss-Ikon", etc. The first superficial big difference that strikes a visitor coming from the West Berlin is that, as a pedestrian, he is safer here; there are many less cars and in East Berlin they tend to obey speed limits.

West Berlin, artificially maintained by heavy subsidies from the Bundesrepublik and from America, is also a showcase. As such it contrasts favorably with the East Sector. Kurfürstendamm, brightly-lighted, prosperous, busy, occasionally gay, is far preferable to the sober, uninspired conformity of the Soviet-style buildings in Stalinallee. Kurfürstendamm lacks the charm of main street in any larger provincial French or Italian town. It is defeated by its own intense self-consciousness, even the self-conscious~~ness~~ fashionableness of the Copenhagen and the Bristol cafes, where the best of Berlin goes to be seen.

The "Kurfürstendamm" begins at the controversial and ugly ruin of the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche by the Zoo. It is surely

one of the curiosities of divided Berlin that the Zoo should have become in effect the center of the western half of the truncated city. To the west of the Brandenburger Tor (still topped by the red flag, although the Quadriga may soon return to its former place of honor) lies the Tiergarten; southwest of the Tiergarten is the Zoo, and at the southwest corner of the Zoo is the Kaiser's Memorial Church and the main street of West Berlin. A hundred years ago the Brandenburger Gate marked the western edge of the city of Berlin, and all this lay beyond. The Kurfürstendamm (which means Prince Elector's Street) was an old thoroughfare, but it had been built as a forest road connecting Berlin with the royal hunting preserve of the Prince Elector of Brandenburg at Grunewald. As late as 1840 Charlottenburg, Wilmersdorf and Pichelsberg were still separate villages in the forests west of the Brandenburger Tor. Bismarck widened the Kurfürstendamm to the present proportions, but left a bridle path down the center for horsemen. Yet now the famous gate marks the eastern boundary of West Berlin (the ruins of pre-Bismarck Berlin are therefore entirely within the Soviet Sector), Charlottenburg is the center of the western city and the Kurfürstendamm is its main street.

The life of the West Berliner is circumscribed by the nature of the "island" in which he lives. He cannot, for example, escape to the Brandenburg countryside or the Baltic seashore on summer weekends as he once did.

"Isn't it strange," a doctor who immigrated from Heidelberg in 1952 said to me, "they tell me the country around Berlin is perfectly beautiful, but we've never seen it and I don't suppose we ever shall, though we've lived here six years." For their vacation this year he took his family to Tunisia.

West Berliners with money fly or drive to the "mainland" for their holidays. The rest camp out in the "countryside" that lies within Berlin, pitching their tents around the Wannsee or the Havel.

In the evening the gayer lights among these may go to a nightclub called "Resi", a peculiar institution that one feels could thrive only in Germany. It is famous in Berlin for its telephone game and for its watershow. Each table has a telephone and an outlet from a pneumatic tube system. The game is to telephone people at other tables or send them notes through the pneumatic postal service, and these may be used either for fun and pranks or for the serious business of making dates. But the climax of the evening is the watershow. Curtains open on a stage beneath which is hidden a long row of high pressure water outlets, which

can be "played" for various pressures, angles and combinations. With appropriate music and lighting water is shot from these nozzles into exotic patterns for perhaps ten minutes. I had a card saying how many thousand liters of water are expended, but have managed to lose it. The performance is grotesque.

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When it is fair time in Leipzig, the Saxon capital—with 610,000 inhabitants the second city of the Zone (after East Berlin)—becomes the German Democratic Republic's showcase before the world. Before I drove south with the Institute's David Binder for a look at the Autumn Sample Fair this month, a West Berlin friend warned me to believe nothing I saw. He wanted me to believe that our designated route would be prepared for us, like Catherine the Great's road to Moscow, with roadside facades of make-believe happy villages and that a special Leipzig would be conjured, like Brigadoon, for the occasion. I should remember, he added, that however good things might superficially appear, the increasing flood of East Germans fleeing to the West — which that week had reached the staggering sum of a thousand a day — was the final word on living conditions in the Zone.

This much of the warning is certainly valid: Any western observer, whatever his previous experience, allowed in for a brief glimpse of an official occasion, must be cautious in reporting what he has seen. Not only will his impressions bear the stamp of his preconceptions, but they must of course reflect his own personal experiences. And personal experiences in East Germany this autumn, can vary greatly, one finds.

The correspondent of the Sunday Times of London, for example, wrote that the Zone "resembles an armed camp" in which Western fair visitors "were subjected to drastic new security measures." All of this is being associated with the renewed tension that is resulting from the Regime's latest war on the schools and the new flood of refugees, which in turn is believed to be linked to the school situation. For this latest crisis the highly publicized flight of Professor Hamel, who should have been presiding as Rector over the celebration of Jena University's 400th birthday early this month, has been taken as an appropriate symbol.

Some western businessmen we spoke to did report exhaustive searches at border crossing-points of both their persons and their belongings. One said he had to strip for border guards who would not say what they were looking for. Official routes to Leipzig from designated crossing points were carefully marked, deviations from them were warned against, and roadblocks to check documents were frequent.

But our experience was quite different. We were stopped only once between Leipzig and the border, although we saw enough

extra patrols to mark the situation as "nervous". And at the border with West Berlin ceremonies for those with fair visas were impressively courteous and simple both going and returning; on neither occasion did border guards even look at the car or its contents.

In Leipzig itself at fair time there are few restrictions on the foreigner. We could go where we liked and the people we met on our own were friendly and eager to talk. Police and other officials were as courteous as official brochures had said they would be.

But a request to interview a local functionary, tour a local school, see the barracks of the People's Army or attend a meeting of the Free German Youth might get lost in a maze of polite redtape. Or, if it were granted, the Western observer found himself shepherded carefully by public relations functionaries from East Berlin and the people he talked to all wore the badge of the Socialist Unity Party.

The city was unquestionably dressed up for its fair and its visitors, but no quantity of bright flags and neon slogans and imported taxis could cover its essential shabbiness. This shabbiness is especially sad because, in the bits of old Leipzig that remain among rubble of the war and the architectural monstrosities of the brave new Sovietized world, one can see what a handsome city it must once have been. Many streets are still tree-lined; in others are only the place where trees once were.

The Sixteenth Century city hall, on the Market Square that is the center of the city and of the fair, is an architectural masterpiece of the South German Renaissance. The church of St. Thomas, where Luther once preached and where Johann Sebastian Bach worked for twenty-seven years (and where he was reburied in 1950, after disinterment from war-wrecked Johanneskirche) is intact, as is most of the square around it. It is a corner of peace and charm, and of a large shop selling religious books and pictures and apparently doing a good business.

Auerbachs Keller, of Faust and Goethe fame, has also survived with its Goethe relics, its Renaissance frescos of Faust, Mephistopheles and the students, and its good wine. And the Thüringerhof, two centuries ago the best restaurant in the city, has been carefully restored to its prewar appearance.

In the northern part of the city, near what is now the Karl Marx University (where half the students one sees appear to be Arab, Indian or Oriental), a handsome residential quarter has escaped the bombings almost untouched. These solid homes built for the Saxon bourgeoisie now house the dependents of the "friendly" Soviet garrison. The school is a school for Russian children, and when I stopped to watch a volleyball game, it was Russian the boys were speaking.

But except for a few sightseers, the Russian troops, billeted in large numbers around Leipzig, remained clear of the Inner City during the fair.

The Inner City and the industrial districts were, as always in Germany, badly mauled by the war. There has been considerable rebuilding, but there are still far more rubble and vacant lots than I had seen in West Berlin or Hannover, although Leipzig was less thoroughly destroyed. Most of the new building is in the massive and unimaginative style that characterizes Stalin-alley in East Berlin. Any Leipziger who mentioned these new structures at all was outspoken in his disdain for the style--despite the fact that he might also say that he, or his wife, had been called on to "volunteer" during some holiday or free hours to help build one of them.

There are no new churches. The government's pressure on religious groups has varied in intensity over the years, but the general policy has been to tear down rather than repair churches badly damaged during the war. This was the fate of the Johanneskirche, among others, and was the reason why the remains of J.S.Bach were removed on the twohundredth anniversary of his death to Thomaskirche.

As a result of wartime destruction and subsequent policy, only one Catholic church in the city is fully operational, one practising Catholic said. But at the same time refugees from beyond the Oder-Neisse border have swelled the city's catholic population from a prewar 50% to nearly 80% of the total 610.000.

But in the last analysis the physical contrast between Leipzig and West Germany, or between East and West Berlin, was not as striking as I had expected. It was, in fact, rather analogous to the contrast between Turin or Milan and Naples or Palermo five or six years ago. The difference, perhaps, lies in the direction of change: the contrast between Turin and Palermo has been there for centuries and is growing less in the prosperous 1950's; but a few years ago Leipzig was at least as prosperous as Hannover, and now the contrast between them grows. Palermo is a much better place to live than it was in 1938; Leipzig a much worse.

Fair time is a good time for the people of Leipzig. Low incomes may be augmented by moving into the kitchen and renting the bedroom to fair visitors, as our own hosts had been doing for years. In addition, the fair brings luxuries like bananas and oranges, not ordinarily available, onto the fruitstands.

In view of the emphasis on light industry in all recent pronouncements, an inquiry in this direction seemed particularly worthwhile.

Ever since Poznan and the Hungarian rebellion the East European governments, blaming the unrest they could not hide on the shortage of such items, have talked of increased production and availability

of consumer durables for the home market. A check of price tags in shops away from the exposition buildings in Leipzig, supplemented by the comments of the East German visitors to the fair and a look at the export models at the fair is revealing.

East German clothing on display at the fair looked good, but the people are wearing something simpler. The contrast between the fashions paraded by mannequins in the exhibition halls (to the tune of "Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White" on the loudspeakers) and those worn by Zone citizens to a gala evening concert by the Leipzig Symphony (where one would suppose their own best clothes would appear) is striking. The men do not do badly: suits are tailored after the Russian fashion, but are well fitted and appear well made. But the women were almost universally dowdy: cheap blouses and skirts, or cotton and rayon print dresses on the younger ones, rumpled, badly fitted dark suits of poor material on the older. Jewelry is either unowned or unworn, the limit being a simple brooch, necklace or bracelet of cheap synthetic material.

At the fair an extensive showing of East German seamless stockings attracted much attention and seemed to be selling well to foreign buyers. But an Eastern German girl, looking carefully at the exhibit, said she works in a large store that sells stockings, and "we get only 60 pairs of the seamless ones a year". When she and her friends want good stockings, they wait for a chance to go to West Berlin to shop.

A large table-model radio manufactured in Dresden sells for \$ 155, at the official exchange rate, <sup>an</sup> equivalent by a well-known West European firm sells for under \$ 80 here in Vienna. An East German tv-radio combination in an attractive modern cabinet and a 17" Tv screen costs \$ 720. A washing machine that will handle seven pounds of laundry costs \$ 250; one half that size \$ 180. Or there is an incredible contraption - an old-fashioned wooden tub with an electric churner - for \$ 90. A small electric iron with temperature control is \$ 8.40. A pressure cooker is \$ 15 and a "Universal Kitchen-machine" that grinds meat, beats eggs and mixes butter costs \$ 81.

These prices become meaningful when related to salaries. A butcher told us he makes 400 marks in a good month - about \$ 100 at the official rate. A printer said he takes home the equivalent of \$ 87.- 350 marks - but said a neighbor who is a member of the security police makes 2000 marks.

But a considerable number of East Germans are managing to accumulate these luxury consumer items, one by one. In the block of apartment houses in which we were lodged there were four television antennas. Our host owned a good table-model radio-phonograph combination, with a fair-sized record collection and an auxiliary speaker wired into the kitchen for his wife. But he still finds it difficult to afford real coffee, butter and sugar for his breakfast.



The reminder that one is not in southern Italy or Austria's Vorarlberg, where people are just as poor, comes when the conversation touches politics. "Dictators are all the same," confided one Leipziger. "Hitler, Stalin, Ulbricht..." Like this one, many talked more freely than we had expected.

"Where are you from?" the man sharing a restaurant table may ask. "The USA." Surprise, a few probing questions, then a lowering of the voice and a quick glance around and an explosion of resentment against the regime.

These conversations were mostly David Binder's. Listening in on them, my general impressions were these: the East German, reminded by the ubiquitous presence of Volkspolizei People's Army or Soviet troops never to repeat the rising of 1953, has many little ways of expressing his political sentiments. Many of these are pathetic. Most seem to be classifiable signs of resentment - in the strong but negative sense in which Albert Camus uses this term, when he calls it "an evil secretion, in a sealed vessel, of prolonged impotence," and contrasts it with the positive act of rebellion.

One man may find an excuse not to fly a red flag from his balcony during the fair.

A teenager may wear blue jeans, "Texas shirt, get a rock and roll haircut, dance to rock and roll music ... and perhaps be arrested for his "decadence".

A self-employed cab driver with an antique car may hopefully talk of buying a new model, disdaining the competition of the People's Own Taxis (which announce their view of the world by printing the word "taxi" on their cabs in both Roman and Russian characters).

Another man may play smuggled West German records on his phonograph - not political records, just music, but from the West.

If he owns a television set the antenna will probably be turned to the West. Is this forbidden? "It is not desired," he answers with a small smile.

"I listen only to RIAs (the U.S. government station in West Berlin) and Luxemburg," another says.

"If you come again, will you bring me some metal taps from Berlin for the heels and toes of my shoes?" a middle-aged man asks. "They annoy the political police."

The trade fair itself is the show that Westerners are supposed to see in Leipzig. Old fair hands from the West told us that more is being shown, and in more variety this year from East German light industry. Official talk was all of matching West German production in this product or that, in line with the pledge made at this year's party congress that East German per capita consumption of "all important industrial

consumer goods" will pass West Germany's by 1961.

Traditional industries - for example the famous Leipzig printing industry and the Saxon furriers - still turn out top quality products. There was an emphasis this year on television sets, new models of radios, electric appliances, cameras and pleasure boating. The furniture, like the fashions, was stylish, modern and (unlike the fashions) inexpensive.

Five sixths of the total floor space was occupied by the exhibits of East Germany itself. These exhibits represented some five thousand exhibitors, including nationally-owned concerns, firms operating "with state participation", privately-owned firms and producers' cooperatives.

This distribution reflects the thoroughly mixed economy that the GDR remains after thirteen years of Communist control. For example, of some 420 industrial enterprises of all sizes in the Leipzig district, an official publication says that only 141 (presumably including all major producers) have been nationalized. At the fair building devoted to fashion and textile industries one floor out of four contained only showings from private firms.

Another thousand firms in the East Zone represent a halfway house on the road to socialism. This is private ownership "with the participation of state capital." Entrepreneurs, frustrated by high taxes and restrictions on private investment, have found this compromise a means of expanding production while retaining partial control of their business. Officially this is termed "allowing private enterprise to participate more actively in the building of socialism."

But trading this year for public and private firms alike seemed to be confined largely to the small peanuts class. A daily bulletin reported with enthusiasm contracts concluded with businessmen from capitalist countries. The scale of most of these: \$25,000 in portable typewriters to Finland; \$7000 in rayon fabrics to Iceland; sporting guns to Greece for \$7500; to Britain ornamental pottery for \$21,000 and furniture for \$77,000.

Aside from the price and quality of the goods offered, which in many instances were simply not competitive, trade was much hampered by restrictive policies of the zone government and by foreign merchants' worries over what sort of currency the Zone would use to pay its bills. These are in fact two sides of the same coin.

Most notable is the GDR's declared determination to maintain a bi-lateral balance of trade with each trading partner. This queer notion can make dealing with the GDR a frustrating experience for a "capitalist" manufacturer who does not represent a planned economy.

Viennese clothiers, for instance, presented a high-quality collective exhibit of Austrian fabrics and tailoring, but found sales well below expectations. The reason: a mild winter last year caused purchases of East German coal by Austria to fall below the contracted level, and the GDR now will not buy more from Austrian tailors until it can sell more to Austrian stoves.

A functionary from the trade ministry justified this policy to me: "We are not like some countries, trading in order to build up bank balances; we trade for what we need and therefore want our trade to be in balance in each instance."

As all foreign trade operations of the Communist countries have their political aspects, so do the displays at the Leipzig fair. To western eyes this intrusion of political posters and slogans among commercial exhibits must seem often inappropriate, sometimes grotesque.

Behind a fabric display a mural showed Ulbricht and Krushchev in the midst of

a group of happy, husky textile workers and proclaimed: "Socialism Triumphs!"

Behind another: "Textile workers of East and West work for a United Germany."

In the middle of an attractive display of curtain materials was a 5' X 4' photograph of ruined buildings and a skeleton, with the legend: "Dresden warns: Better active today than radioactive tomorrow!"

This threat of "atomic death" and the projected armament of West Germany with atomic weapons are favorite themes. In the middle of a display of ladies' and men's underwear the manufacturer displayed a series of blow-ups of photographs of demonstrations against atomic weapons staged in West German cities like Hamburg and Cologne.

One of the most attractive displays at the fair was that of the East German nationalized fur coat industry. It is a triumph of the modern art of window display, artistically organized and discreetly lighted. On each table, made a part of the display, was a lifesize photo of a happy worker at the fur factory, and with it an appropriate testimonial.

In one a robust and pinkcheeked German woman is seen bending over a cutting machine and is identified as "Gertrud Grundshock, Worker in the People's Own Fur Industry Schkenditz." Below is the testimonial: "We wives and mothers want to work and live in peace, and therefore I condemn the atomic war preparations in West Germany."

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Against the background of these rather haphazard observations of life in Berlin and Leipzig must be placed my first impressions of unoccupied Vienna. One feels immediately that this is no longer a sad or tragic city, this Vienna. Here indeed is the contrast with Leipzig (both sad and tragic) or even with Berlin. Lights, shops brimming over, smartly dressed people, good food properly served, contemporary decor the most modern and tasteful I have seen anywhere, busy streets full of late model cars - three-fifths of them with Vienna licenses - and the newspapers worried about growing traffic problems...of such are first impressions made.

The tower of St. Stephen's Cathedral is still enscaffolded, but the Opera long since has stood free. One can no longer cross the street at the intersection of the Ring and Karntnerstrasse, by the Opera, where most of the city's traffic concentrates. One must now descend by escalator to a passage under the intersection that is a highly attractive circular shopping center, with fifteen ultra-modern small shops surrounding a central cafe.

The most striking change since 1953, it seems to me, is in the II and XX districts, between the Danube Canal and the River, formerly part of the Soviet sector. I have a memory of destroyed buildings virtually untouched since 1945, of streets dark at night, of sadness and gloom accentuated by the gray and wet of December.

Still not the equal of much of the city, these districts have come far. They are brightly lighted. Restaurants glow with warm and prosperous welcome. Most of the shells of buildings have gone to make way for modern structures, and scaffolding surrounds even the badly blitzed Diana Baths, which are being restored rather than replaced. The antique trolleys that rattled along in 1953 have been largely replaced by modern ones, cleanly painted and full of Viennese bound for the Inner City for the evening.

In the Danube Canal a trim paddle-wheel steamer each evening takes aboard a load of young people for an evening of wine and dance music on the River. Lining the railings of the bridges over the Canal flowerboxes full of petunias add a touch of gaiety and color.

My first general thought in wandering around the city was that an Italian invasion of the Austrian capital had taken place after the four occupying powers had left - that the cultural and mercantile vigor of the Italian Republic had accomplished what all Mussolini's political and military intrigues had been unable to do: the subjugation of Austria. The city is as rife with espresso coffeehouses and Olivetti office machines as Rome; the style of the new buildings partakes more of postwar Milan and Genoa than of Berlin or Hannover; fashions are Italian, all ladies' shoes seem to be imported from the south, and a high percentage of brand names are Italian, "manufactured under license in Austria."

But closer examination reveals a uniquely Austrian flavor in all of these things - except possibly the coffee, which is pure Italian. Vienna today is certainly not a German city, but neither has it become a Venetian or Lombard one. Risking too blithe a generalization, I have found the city a blend of north and south that has always been a unique Alpine accomplishment. It is also, incidentally, a delightful accomplishment.

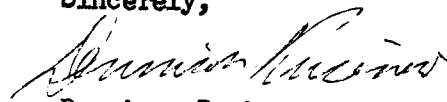
This impression, if it proves valid, does a service in reminding us that Austria has important north-south passes (among them the Brenner) as well as an east-west river. And I find myself remembering what most of the contemporary clichés about Vienna's eastward face have forgotten: that Austria's drang nach Osten became significant only after the Risorgimento had cut her off from Italian adventures, and that Italian adventures had been a major preoccupation at least since the peace at Karlowitz secured her eastern frontiers against the Turks.

One must climb again to the Kahlenberg for a different sort of impression. The high hill that looks down on Vienna and the Danube is in fact the last of the Alps, and it faces east and southeast. It may be true that the flat plain one looks at from there is not in fact the beginning of the steppes of Asia, but only the steppes of Hungary, an intermontane basin caught between the Alps and the Carpathians. Still, the plain stretches farther than the eye can see and one feels that he is looking at Asia. And if this is more poetry than geographic fact, it is important poetry, if only because the Viennese have felt it for five hundred years and counted themselves Christian Europe's easternmost bastion.

Already, in the few days I have been here, a dozen Austrians have remarked this fact to me. It may be partially discounted as the pitiful conceit of a much humbled people, but both history and geography lend it some weight.

And so do present circumstances.

Sincerely,



Dennison Rusinow

Received New York September 30, 1958