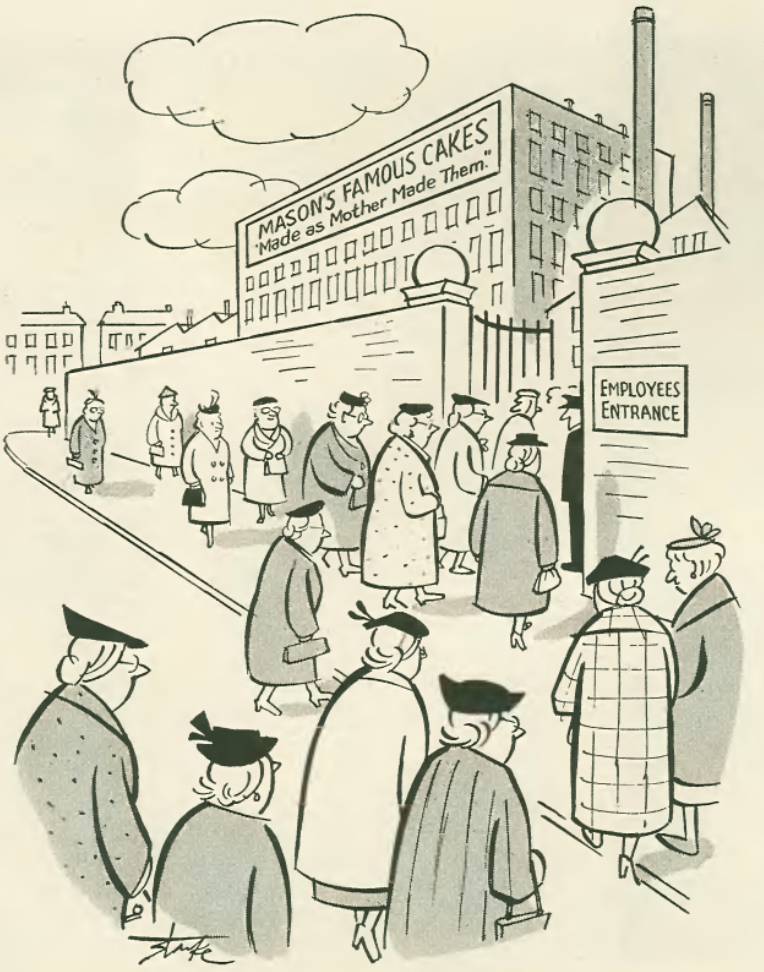
LETTER FROM VIENNA

NOVEMBER 14

AFTER seventeen and a half years of dictatorship and humiliation, war and four-power occupation, the Austrians are now trying hard, if not always successfully, to live up to their position as citizens of the world's most recently proclaimed sovereign nation. Contrary to some rather breathless accounts in the local newspapers, the people of Vienna greeted the signing of the State Treaty last May 15th with conspicuous restraint, and they were scarcely more exuberant during the night devoted to independence celebrations last month. On the evening of October 22nd, the Vienna city administration invited the whole Austrian population, numbering some seven million, to join in "a freedom party" in front of the City Hall on the Ringstrasse, a magnificent thoroughfare bordered by an architectural jumble of baroque, Gothic, and Renaissance façades, Byzantine-style "onion" churches, a modern skyscraper, a pseudo-Hellenic Parliament building, and the rebuilt Gothic and Renaissance State Opera House. Curious to see what the response to this invitation would be, I attended the event, along with some three hundred thousand Austrians, whose mood was as confusing as the architecture. Few of them bothered to avail themselves of the small Austrian flags that hawkers were trying to sell, and there was little evidence of patriotic fervor. To be sure, everybody admired the illumination of the City Hall, which, it was frequently remarked, looked like a fairy-tale castle, and everybody applauded the Schubert marches and Johann Strauss waltzes played by the Wiener Symphoniker. (The Republic of Austria has a national anthem, the "Bundeshynne," but it became obvious during the concert that the people's anthem is "The Blue Danube.") For the most part, however, the guests at the freedom party simply strolled in a leisurely fashion along the Ringstrasse, complaining about the price of potatoes (up forty per cent lately), the increase in streetcar fares (from 1.30 schillings, or five cents, to 1.90, or seven and a half cents), and the rising cost of living in general, which will probably cause the Socialists, now in the majority in Vienna, to lose a great many votes at the next election. In front of the Imperial Hotel, a father gravely explained to his teen-age son that the building was soon going to be a luxury hotel again. "Hotel?" said the boy incredulously. "Again?" For the past seventeen years, the Imperial has been anything but a hotel, having served as Hitler's local headquarters, with a swastika flying from its roof, during the first seven of them, and as the headquarters of the Soviet High Commissioner, flying a red flag, during the remaining ten. Clearly, it will be easier to revamp the Imperial's interior than the boy's outlook.

The lack of enthusiasm at patriotic gatherings here, which contrasts sharply with the high spirits evident at soccer games and in every *Heuriger* winehouse in town, has been interpreted by some people as a sign of "political maturity" on the part of the Viennese, and by others as a sign of "healthy skepticism." A Viennese acquaintance of mine who was among the crowd in front of the Imperial Hotel on March 14, 1938, a few hours after Hitler arrived in Vienna, recalls that the people were downright hysterical as they waved and shouted, "We want to see our Führer!" He feels things are better now. "People are learning at last," he remarked the other day. "They are beginning to realize that those wild demonstrations paved the way for the greatest tragedy in Austria's history." But there are those who question how thoroughly they've learned it and point glumly to the fact that one of the first bills to be introduced in the Austrian Parliament after the departure of the occupation forces was the so-called Nazi Amnesty Bill—previously rejected by the Allied Council—which would restore the rights, perquisites, and financial benefits of many former Nazis.

Although the Viennese are pleased at the prospect of not having to go on living under a military occupation, their pleasure is tempered with caution; the pessimists among them (of whom there are many) are not averse to pointing out to one and all that the Russians have moved back only a scant thirty miles. In the small towns and villages that were formerly part of the Soviet Zone, there is naturally considerable rejoicing, for there the citizens have been freed from a life of ceaseless terror inspired by arrests, secret interrogations, and the sudden disappearance of friends and neighbors. The reaction to the departure of the troops in the Western Zones was somewhat different, particularly in Salzburg, until recently the headquarters of seventeen thousand American soldiers, who were spending almost thirty million dollars a year in the area. Shortly before the signing of the State Treaty, a newspaper in Vienna ob-



served, "Salzburg will be liberated from the Americans and their Frauleins, and 680,000,000 schillings in income." It is the liberation from schillings that hurts. As a matter of fact, all Austrian taxpayers are beginning to worry deeply about what independence is going to cost them, and suspect that it is going to cost them plenty. Dr. Bruno Kreisky, the Under-Secretary of State, has estimated that the price of freedom will be about one and a third billion schillings a year, or approximately one and a third per cent of the national income. "It could be much worse," Dr. Kreisky has been quoted as saying. "The Finns had to pay almost nine per cent of their national income for years as the price of regaining their freedom." But it's not what the Finns had to pay that the Austrians are worried about.

The Austrians console themselves with the reflection that they are now entering an era of neutrality, but apparently there are almost as many definitions of neutrality as there are Austrians. There seems to be a persistent yearning to regard Austria's neutrality as comparable to Switzerland's, but realists admit that the positions of the two nations are hardly the same. The Swiss might be said to have an armed neutrality; they maintain a small but excellently trained and equipped army, which—in their belief, at any rate—was one reason the Germans didn't invade their country in the Second World War, and they keep aloof from international involvements, notably the United Nations. Swiss neutrality is also bolstered, of course, by the fact that Switzerland is a celebrated international listening post and banking center. Austria, on the other hand, as yet has no army to speak of and is quite eager to join the United Nations, and while it may be possible to pick up some interesting bits of international information within its boundaries, the chance of its becoming a banking center at any time in the discernible future seems dismally thin. Moreover, Switzerland's neutrality is embodied in its constitution; Austria's isn't.

With characteristic Austrian aversion to facing cold realities, the nation's statesmen have carefully avoided saying what degree of neutrality they have in mind. Not long ago, Secretary of State Leopold Figl on the one hand told a visiting group of American legislators that Austria's neutrality was "solely a military question," and on the other assured them that the new five-year economic agreements between Austria and the Soviet Union will not be permitted

to turn Austria into an "economic satellite" of Russia. And the Western powers, for their part, did nothing to nail down the Austrian position when they said that they would come to the aid of the country only *if* the Austrians are attacked, *if* they have an army, and *if* they show a willingness to fight for their independence. With everything so indefinite, the general feeling here is that the individual citizen has enough on his mind without worrying about the technical aspects of neutrality, which are the Foreign Ministry's job anyway.

Austria's Communists interpret neutrality as entirely precluding association—economic, cultural, or any other kind—with the West. At the same time, they urge associating in every conceivable way with the East. During a single week last month, the Communist Party in Vienna launched a campaign to sell subscriptions to the local Communist-run Scala Theater; Rumania invited Austrian painters to exhibit their work at a show in Bucharest next January; Vienna's Austro-Soviet Society opened a new library here; the Austro-Czechoslovak Society announced the opening of an exhibit of Czech books and recordings; and a Soviet trade delegation arrived in Linz to negotiate under the terms of the new economic agreement and was informed by the general manager of the V.O.E.S.T. Iron & Steel Works that his company was interested in importing Soviet ore and coal.

Despite these displays of camaraderie, however, the Austrian Communists are now on the defensive everywhere except in the Zistersdorf oil fields, which produce over three and a half million tons of crude oil a year. (One million tons of this output must go to the Soviet Union annually for the next ten years, as a consequence of the Potsdam agreement.) Of the twelve thousand workers in the oil fields, close to half are Communists or Communist sympathizers, for during the ten years of Russian occupation, the Soviet managers of the fields followed a policy of firing old-line workers and filling their jobs with Communists. In addition, they established "activist" cells in the community, and thereby won control of many of the workers' councils. Like all other Austrian properties that were formerly run by the Russians, the oil fields have been taken over by the government, and in Zistersdorf the new state management has not found the going easy. As the start of what it hoped would be an energetic clean-up campaign, it dismissed six hundred members of the *Werkschutz*, a Communist strong-arm squad set up to

intimidate the workers, but it soon received so many threats of physical violence that it capitulated and took the six hundred men back. The Communists' success in Zistersdorf, however, is an isolated manifestation of their power. It seems most unlikely that Austrian workers in general will soon, if ever, succumb to the Communist propaganda line. After all, the Austrians' most important contribution to contemporary history may well be their postwar voting record. Not once has more than five per cent of the population voted Communist.

During the occupation, a total of four hundred and fifty factories, shops, timber forests, and other enterprises came under the domination of USIA, the Soviet-controlled holding company that supervised the handling of "German assets" in the Soviet Zone. The Russian managers are gone, but the results of their policies are still in evidence. Many of these enterprises were looted by the Russians before they left, in spite of their promise to return them intact to the Austrians. Drilling machinery from Zistersdorf was sent to Rumania and the Soviet Union, and whole forests were felled, with the explanation that they were being threatened by a mysterious "root disease." In the interests of creating further havoc, the Russians, just before they left, granted bewildering pay boosts to large numbers of workers, an act of generosity that has been a source of serious embarrassment to the Austrian state managers. In view of the Russian depredations, it is not surprising that nearly all the factories and businesses in the former Soviet Zone are run down and sorely in need of repairs and new capital. During the occupation, some of these factories tooled up to produce cheap, shoddy goods for their only market, which was in the East. Now they can find no buyers in Austria for their second-rate merchandise. By and large, these factories are continuing to manufacture their hard-to-sell products, and the inevitable deficit becomes the responsibility of the Austrian government, which hesitates to put a stop to the whole uneconomic procedure because it would mean laying off many workers.

The government is prayerfully hoping that Western investors will come to its rescue and help it restore the former Soviet Zone to normal and profitable production. It simply hasn't the resources to do the job itself. The small sulphur-spring health resort of Baden serves to point up the plight of the whole region. This once lovely town, fourteen miles southwest of Vienna, was known to the Romans two thousand years ago;

to Beethoven, who wrote much of his Ninth Symphony there; and to gamblers between the two World Wars, who lost their money at the local casino. But since 1945 Baden has been known to everybody in Austria primarily as the unlucky town that the Red Army chose for its headquarters, and it is now a conglomeration of shabby hotels and seedy houses that have come to look like stables. As a matter of fact, one fine villa, or part of it, *was* a stable for a while, when some Russians, for reasons best known to themselves, kept a cow in its attic; pigs roamed the kitchens of other houses whose baroque façades testify silently to their elegant past. Although Baden was always a business based on luxury, it was still a business, and everything possible is being done to revive it as a money-earner. It has been designated Austria's "Emergency Area No. 1," and the once carefully tended gardens of its Kurpark, in which the Russians pastured their horses, have been hurriedly prettied up; the casino is again operating in the Badner Hof, offering roulette, baccarat, and chemin de fer; and a thousand beds have been made available in various sanitariums and hotels. But before the war there were six times as many beds available, and it is for this sort of thing that Baden needs capital—some ten million dollars' worth of it. The government has promised two million restorative dollars, which leaves the Badners eight million more to scare up as best they can.

The future of many enterprises in the Soviet Zone is complicated by dogmatic arguments between the two factions of the coalition government—the Socialists and the Austrian People's Party. The Socialists favor outright nationalization of these enterprises; the People's Party wants a return to private ownership. Take the case of the automobile firm of Austro-Fiat, fifty-one per cent of whose stock was held by Italians before the war. Following the Anschluss, the Germans put down a token payment and simply appropriated the Italian shares. For a while after the end of the war, the Allied Military Government blocked the shares, but it took no position at all on the sticky legal question of ownership. Later, the Italians claimed the shares, and their claim was sustained by the courts. So the Allied Military Government released them, and the Austrian Minister of Finance, a People's Party man, authorized their return to the Italians, but at this point the Socialists said nothing doing. The shares are now in the hands of a public administrator, and no one seems to

know what the next step is. There are hundreds of such cases. The decade ahead should be a happy one for Austrian lawyers.

The Americans have pumped nearly a billion and a half dollars' worth of public and private assistance into Austria, while the Russians, in one way or another, have sucked almost as much out, yet the fact is that, except in the Soviet Zone, one frequently hears the Russians spoken of more favorably than the Americans. The Russians in Austria set out to make themselves feared, and succeeded; the Americans, for the most part, tried to make themselves liked, and didn't make much headway. To the average Viennese, it was the Soviet Union that gave Austria its freedom. For some reason, he has forgotten that before the Austrians got their freedom, the Western powers spent two hundred and sixty-seven meetings with the Russians trying to get it for them.

PROBABLY the most distasteful aspect of independence for the Austrians is the necessity of building themselves an army. Ever since the First World War, the previously respected profession of soldiering has not been popular here. (From the point of view of some sentimental Viennese, one of the biggest mistakes the country ever made was sending the old pre-1914 Imperial Army, with its tall and elegantly uniformed officers and smartly marching guard regiments, off to war.) The Treaty of Saint-Germain, ratified in 1919, limited Austria's army to thirty thousand troops and severely restricted their equipment. It was an unhappy army; twice between 1919 and 1938 its soldiers were ordered to fire on their fellow-citizens during political riots, and the individual experiences of most Austrians who fought in the Wehrmacht during the Second World War—and especially of those who spent time in Russian prisoner-of-war camps—did little to make the military life seem more attractive. Austria's recently passed draft law is, therefore, a far from welcome piece of legislation. It is also a far from satisfactory one, since it is a compromise reached after many uncomfortable deliberations. Government leaders belonging to the once revolutionary Socialist Party, which has long been proud of its anti-military record, now have the unpleasant task of trying to persuade their voters that Austria must have an army if it is to protect its independence. This situation plays right into the hands of the Communists, who trumpet their

"peace" slogans and accuse the Socialists of double-crossing the workers.

Once the draft law was passed, an Office for National Defense was set up on the third floor of a modest building in downtown Vienna and a few former officers in civilian clothes went to work trying to organize the new army. Their commander is Generalmajor Sektionschef Doktor Ingenieur Emil Liebitzky, a small, white-haired gentleman with courtly manners. He is to be the army's only general. A battery officer in the First World War, he later became his country's military attaché in Rome and a member of the Austrian general staff, from which he was fired by Hitler. In his present position, he reports directly to the Federal Chancellor, Julius Raab. The General has more than his share of problems to contend with—problems involving psychology, money, personnel, and matériel. His inventory, as he starts out, consists of seventy-six hundred members of the so-called Border Guard Units, organized in 1952 for nothing more than ordinary domestic police work; a number of barracks left in deplorable condition by the occupation troops; a miscellaneous collection of weapons donated by the occupation powers; and hundreds of miles of porous frontier. The last item must give Liebitzky the shudders. The eastern provinces of Lower Austria and Burgenland, bordering upon Hungary and Czechoslovakia, are as flat as a lawn—a defender's nightmare. The General might find some pleasure in the fact that the mountainous western provinces of Tyrol and Vorarlberg are perfect territory for repelling an invasion except that no one expects an invasion from that direction. In most cases, the draft law, as part of the compromise, limits military service to nine months, which is not time enough to make soldiers out of civilians, and certainly not out of civilians who don't want to become soldiers. The first contingent of draftees—about twenty-five thousand men who were born in 1937—will be inducted next spring. They are reported to be suffering en masse from acute "08/15" phobia, having read, or seen the film version of, "08/15," Germany's most successful postwar best-seller, by Hans Hellmut Kirst, which is a cutting satire on barracks life.

The other day, by way of getting a first-hand look at the nucleus of the new army, I drove to the Fasangarten Barracks, in Schönbrunn, which were recently vacated by the First Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment and are now serving as quarters for the First

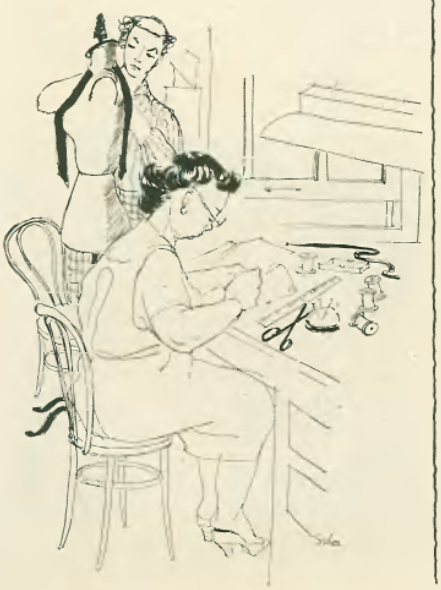
Battalion of the First Border Guard Unit. The barracks were built in 1938, on grounds that once were a hunting preserve of Empress Maria Theresa. My first impression of the place was of an abundance of buildings and a scarcity of soldiers. The few men in evidence, aside from those on guard duty, were either carrying boxes and furniture about or working hard at doing nothing. Interested to note that the time-honored art of goldbricking was already well implanted in the world's newest army, I went into the administration building, which smelled of old dust and new paint. The battalion commander, Major Friedrich Birsak—I found him by means of a slip of paper bearing his name and rank, written in a hasty scribble, that was glued to an office door—told me that he had just brought his men to Fasangarten from Ebelsberg, near Linz, where for the past three years he had been discreetly conducting an unauthorized military-training program under the benevolent eyes of the American occupation authorities.

"We had to keep fit, didn't we?" Birsak said to me, looking trim, erect, and eminently fit himself. "We were forced to stay under cover, though. Austria wasn't supposed to have anything like an army. So we dispensed with parade drill and concentrated on field exercises—mountain problems in the Dachstein-Salzkammergut area. Took us five nights to get there, marching only at night. In the daytime, we would hide somewhere. Several of my men were Communists, and they kept the Russians pretty well informed about everything we did. But there was nothing I could do about that. These men were serving their country, and their political beliefs were none of my business. After all, the Communist Party is legal in Austria. Our American friends gave us rifles, machine guns, and hand grenades, but no manuals to go with them. At night, we'd take the new weapons apart and assemble them again, and from what we learned we made up mimeographed textbooks for our instructors. By the time our friends let us have the manuals, we already knew all about their weapons. I'm not worried about the mixture of weapons from different nations in the new Austrian Army. Once you've learned to handle one kind of rifle, you can handle them all."

Birsak has had a good many opportunities to study rifles of various designs. He enlisted in the prewar Austrian Army, and then was drafted into

the Wehrmacht. He fought against the Russians, and was later taken prisoner by the Americans and shipped to the United States, where he spent months in prison camps in Arkansas and Idaho. After being repatriated, he enlisted in a Border Guard Unit and began looking forward to the day when it would become part of an army.

LAST August 25th, the doctors of Vienna, who have been facing slow economic strangulation, took an unusual step—unusual for doctors, anyway, and especially for Viennese doctors. They went out on strike. Although Viennese doctors have long enjoyed a worldwide reputation for their dedication to their profession and for their original contributions to medical science (five Viennese, or Vienna-trained, doctors have received Nobel Prizes in medicine), and although wealthy patients used to travel thousands of miles for a consultation here, it has become more and more difficult in recent years for the city's physicians to earn enough money to get by. The trouble really goes back to the time immediately after the First World War. In the chaos that followed the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, many doctors in the hinterland, finding themselves without a practice, converged on the capital as at least a relatively stable and profitable place in which to work. During the twenties and early thirties, Vienna may well have had the greatest concentration of medical talent in the world. The famous medical school of the University of Vienna, which drew students from both hemispheres, provided teaching jobs for many doctors, but it also steadily increased the number of local practitioners. In fact, the city had so



many doctors that even after Hitler followed up his Anschluss by deporting several hundred of them for being Jewish, there were plenty left. But during the war and the long aftermath of the occupation, Vienna went into a medical slump. Its doctors were cut off from their colleagues elsewhere and were out of touch with the phenomenal advances being made in their field. Students from other countries who might have attended the medical school found it difficult or impossible to get into Austria, and so did many wealthy foreign patients who in the old days had visited their Viennese doctors regularly; now these patients patronized Swiss or West German doctors if they lived outside the Soviet sphere of influence, and if they lived within it, they weren't wealthy any longer.

Thus, by the time restrictions against entering Austria were relaxed, Vienna's reputation as a center of advanced medical theories and techniques had become blurred, and the Viennese doctors found themselves competing with one another for a diminished, and in many cases far from affluent, clientele. Moreover, their dilemma had been intensified by a new ingredient—socialized medicine, which had been making increasing headway in Austria. The movement got its start under the Socialists in 1919 and was given a big boost during the Nazi regime; at that time, everyone who was drafted for civilian-labor service automatically became eligible for free medical treatment and insurance against accidents or physical incapacity. A social-insurance law passed in 1947 extended these benefits to all civilian workers—even those who were fired or quit their jobs—as long as they kept up their payments. The intent of the law was humanitarian—nearly everybody, no matter how poor, was sure of getting treatment when he became ill—but, as often happens with such laws, its application sometimes resulted in glaring inequities. Thousands of former draft-labor workers, for example, have become extremely prosperous since the war, but they still demand (and are legally justified in demanding) free medical treatment. Three out of every four Austrians now have medical coverage, and in consequence Vienna's thirteen hundred general practitioners and one thousand specialists are to a very large extent dependent upon insurance practice. But only doctors who have contracts with the Social Insurance Agency can treat insured patients, and at present the agency (it is guided in

its selection of doctors by recommendations of the Medical Chamber, the counterpart of our A.M.A., which, in turn, selects its candidates more or less on the basis of seniority) has signed contracts with only three-quarters of the general practitioners and fewer than half of the specialists.

Even a doctor who has a contract with the agency is a long way from opulence. He gets the equivalent of a dollar every three months from the agency for each patient who comes under his care, and that is all he gets, no matter how sick the patient is or how many times, day or night, the doctor is called to his bedside. Often a doctor's streetcar fare for visits to a patient exceeds his fee. The agency claims that it cannot afford to pay its contract doctors more, to which the doctors retort that there seems to be plenty of public money for putting up new administration buildings. "The agency skimps on its medical service to the public in the one place the public won't notice—or if it does notice, won't care much—and that's the doctors' fees," one nettled physician told me not long ago. Moreover, the doctors complain that the agency has set limits on the amount of free medical supplies they may prescribe, and when they exceed these, they are obliged to pay the agency the difference out of their own pockets. Many doctors in Vienna are now deeply in debt, if for no other reason than their conscientiousness.

A young man anywhere knows that he is probably committing himself to a life of personal sacrifice when he decides to become a doctor. In Vienna, though, it must take almost a martyr complex to bring a young man to that decision. After the usual long years of expensive study and unremunerative interning, he must spend around two thousand dollars, which he very likely has to borrow or marry, to open a new office. Then he hangs up his shingle and waits. Of course, that is an experience common to young doctors in many other parts of the world, but in Vienna the hitch is that the waiting period is likely to represent a considerable part of the doctor's career, for who is going to pay a young and unknown doctor for treatment that he can get for nothing from a great specialist? The young doctor must stick it out somehow until he gets a contract with the Social Insurance Agency, and that may not be for years. Perhaps he is able to pick up a little money as a *locum tenens*, but more often than not he is able to survive only by taking a job

that is unrelated to medicine, or, at best, by working as a travelling salesman for a pharmaceutical or surgical-supply company. And even when he finally lands a contract, his future is bleak.

In 1951, the Social Welfare Ministry agreed to overhaul the outdated Social Insurance Law. Doctors were not invited to the Ministry's preliminary discussions of the matter, and as soon as they became aware of their exclusion, nine thousand of them, from all over Austria, held a meeting here in Vienna, after which they staged a solemn protest march along the Ringstrasse in their white coats. The parade of nine thousand silent, grim-faced doctors (and twenty-five hundred equally grim-faced dentists) won the public's sympathy, with the result that the government invited representatives of the medical profession to join in its subsequent deliberations and the doctors were assured by the Federal Chancellor that their position would be given "benevolent consideration." When the new bill was presented to Parliament, however, it contained nothing to better the plight of the doctors. And so, after fuming and fretting for four more years, the doctors finally went on strike in an effort to force the government to change things. Specifically, the doctors proposed that they be allowed to collect their regular fees from any patient earning more than two hundred dollars a month (the patient to be partly reimbursed by the Social Insurance Agency) and that all licensed medical practitioners be given contracts by the agency. For forty-eight hours, only emergency medical treatment was available in Vienna. It was a peaceful strike; pickets parading around the big clinics were served tea and sandwiches by people who at one time or another had been their patients. When it was all over, a few minor concessions were made in the bill before Parliament (a patient could choose his own doctor, no doctor could be fired by the agency without cause, five hundred doctors were to be added to the agency's roster), and it was passed.

ONE of the symbols of Austria's imperial past, the Spanish Riding School, has just returned to Vienna after ten years' wandering. (The reason it did not come home sooner is that the Russians might have made off with its horses and personnel on the theory that, in a technical sense, they were former German assets.) This is the world's greatest school of the art of classical riding, and it is also the oldest, although there seems

to be some uncertainty as to precisely when it was organized. The earliest known mention of it appears in a document written in 1572, which refers simply to "repairs made at the Spanish Riding Stable in Vienna." The school itself—actually, it is more a school for horses than for riders, as anyone who saw its superbly trained stallions at the Horse Show in Madison Square Garden five years ago can testify—never was Spanish, but the ancestry of its beautiful white horses can, in the main, be traced directly back to a famous breed of Iberian mounts, which was improved by the Moors during their occupation of the peninsula. In the middle of the sixteenth century, Emperor Maximilian II acquired several of the horses in Spain and with them established the Court Stud in the village of Lipizza, near Trieste, which then belonged to Austria. This not only brought about a surge of interest in riding as an art but gave the breed the name by which it is known today—Lipizzan. Lipizzan horses are not of pure Spanish stock, however, for over the years an Oriental strain has been deliberately introduced by the importation of stallions from the East.

At the end of the First World War, the school was severely reduced when most of its animals, along with a lot of other Hapsburg properties, were removed to Italy and Czechoslovakia, but gradually, between wars, it succeeded in building up a new stud with the few of its mounts left in Austria. Another crisis threatened the school at the end of the Second World War. The horses were stabled in Vienna when the battle for the city started, but they were evacuated to Upper Austria just before the arrival of the Red Army. There they caught the eye of the late General Patton, who was an expert horseman, and he immediately took them under his enthusiastic protection. For some time, the horses were stabled at Wels, in Upper Austria, and then, as the school got back on its feet, they were sent on tour in Europe, Canada, and the United States.

The director of the school is Colonel Alois Podhajsky, a tall former cavalry officer, who is said to know more about fine horses than any other man on the Continent. Last month, he and his thirty assistant instructors presented the Lipizzans to their first postwar Viennese audience in the eighteenth-century baroque riding hall that was built on Josefsplatz during the reign of Charles VI, whose portrait hangs in the hall's

Court box. (It is typical of the changing times that for the past ten years the riding hall, which was the scene of great social affairs during the Congress of Vienna, served as a storeroom for the stage sets of the Vienna State Opera Company, while the opera house was being rebuilt.) The Colonel and his men, who wore the uniforms and Napoleonic headgear that have been traditional for two hundred years, put on an astonishing display of grace and elegance as they executed the intricate steps and figures of expert manège, including such self-explanatory ones as the pas de deux and the pirouette, as well as more esoteric forms, like the pesade (rearing), the courbette (leaping with the forelegs raised and equally advanced and with the hind legs leaving the ground an instant before the forelegs land), the croupade (like the courbette, except that the hind legs must be brought well up under the horse's belly while the forelegs are still off the ground), the terre à terre (again like the courbette, except that the leaps are shorter and the feet are not raised so high from the ground), and the capriole (leaping straight up, with all four feet off the ground, and kicking out with the hind feet at the height of the leap, but without advancing). The finale was a quadrille, flawlessly done by several stallions.

After the performance, I had a brief talk with Colonel Podhajsky, and he told me that, as horses go, Lipizzans mature slowly. "We start sending ours to school at the age of four," he said. "For the first two years, we give them the same training that any other well-trained saddle horse gets. Then, in the third year—when the horse is seven, that is—the animals that have shown the greatest aptitude graduate from what we call low school to high school. We train them only forty-five minutes a day. That's all they can take, because the demands upon their powers of concentration are enormous. High-school riding involves classical movements that date back to the times when horses were trained for tournaments and knightly battle. As for our riders, they get a four-year course, at the end of which they are prepared to exhibit trained stallions in all the classical movements and to train a horse to perform them."

EVEN more reminiscent of the spirit of old Vienna than the Colonel's Lipizzans was the fever of excitement that gripped the city for a good six months before the reopening of the State

Opera House, on November 5th. Here was indeed a striking demonstration of the Austrians' ability to ignore the unpleasant facts of life by escaping into a pleasant haze compounded of singing, waltzes, and wine. What other civilized nation, having lost a couple of wars that left it hungry, impoverished, and demoralized, would not only invest ten million dollars to rebuild a bombed-out opera house but give it priority over much needed hospitals, schools, apartment houses—and doctors? That is precisely what was done here, and almost everybody agrees that it was precisely the thing to do. To the Austrians, their rebuilt opera house on the Ringstrasse is incontestable evidence that Austria has landed on her feet; it has gone a long way to cure a national inferiority complex that started to develop one morning in 1919 when the Austrians found that their empire, which had once extended from the shores of the Adriatic to the forests of Eastern Poland, was now a tiny, shrunken country, with Vienna as its top-heavy head. To be sure, the Austrians did not lose their opera house with their empire—they kept it until the afternoon of March 12, 1945, when it was bombed by American planes—but the fact that they have now regained it after losing it makes them feel, however illogically, that they have become a world power again in at least one highly competitive field. When, a few weeks before the opening, Austria's national soccer team was badly beaten by the Hungarians, a Viennese newspaper observed, "Now only the State Opera team can restore the international prestige of our country."

One of the first things Chancellor Raab said in his statement to Parliament upon returning from his successful mission to Moscow last April was that he hoped the last of the occupation troops would be out of Austria before the opening of the opera house. It is doubtful whether the Chancellor's hope greatly influenced the logistics of the military commanders involved, but as things worked out, the last foreign soldiers left Austria on October 15th, a comfortable two weeks before the opening—or perhaps one should say before what was to have been the opening. Because in the end the opening became eight openings, all part of a four-week festival devoted to the presentation of Beethoven's "Fidelio," Mozart's "Don Giovanni," Strauss's "Der Rosenkavalier" and "Die Frau ohne Schatten," Wagner's "Die Meistersinger," Verdi's "Aïda," Alban Berg's "Wozzeck," a modern

Austrian work that is on the way to becoming part of the established repertoire, and a pair of ballets—Adolphe Adam's "Giselle" and Boris Blacher's "Othello."

While the top price of two hundred dollars that was charged for seats at the opening opening was somewhat reduced for the subsequent openings, few Austrians could afford a seat at any of them, and a great many who could afford a seat couldn't get one. Since it was the Austrian people's money that rebuilt their opera house, this caused some grumbling. The Vienna newspapers tried to salve hurt feelings by reminding their readers that here was a chance for the opera to cash in; it seemed certain, said the press, that during the first two weeks of the festival the box-office receipts would equal the total for its most recent full season, in 1943-44. The whole question of who was going to get in and who wasn't became a general preoccupation. The means by which choice seats were being distributed was subjected to Parliamentary inquiries and Cabinet investigations. Lotteries were run off with gallery seats as prizes. In a desperate effort to offend as few people as possible, a pre-opening opening was held on November 4th—a semi-public dress rehearsal of "Don Giovanni," with admission by invitation only, for public officials, foreign diplomats, and relatives of the singers and orchestra members. Then, on the fifth, came *the* opening, with "Fidelio," followed by the opening of "Don Giovanni" on the sixth. Notwithstanding all such valiant efforts to appease ruffled sensibilities, however, many friendships of long standing have been broken, and for each happy person who got a ticket there are at least ten still angry ones who didn't.

As the great day approached, the frenzy over what came to be called "the Austrian Coronation" reached heights that might be equalled in the United States only if the World Series was played and a Presidential election was held and an aged widow won the top prize on "The $64,000 Question" all in a single week. Hotels were jammed; commemorative postage stamps were issued; pictures of the opera house appeared on cigarette packages; and pâtisseries made models of it in cake. Peanut-gallery enthusiasts announced that they would establish a world's record by queuing up for days on end in order to get one of the five hundred and thirty-nine standing-room admissions for the first of the openings, and they would undoubtedly have done so

if the management had not considerately sold them tickets and told them to go home after a mere two days and nights outside the house, during which Karl Böhm, the director of the opera and a former top-gallery man himself, sent them hot dogs.

For the gala November 5th opening, the opera house was surrounded by wooden railings guarded by police, and the streets around it were closed to traffic. Inside the house, the performers waited apprehensively, fearing that after such a buildup the evening would be an anticlimax. As it happened, although the evening was far from anticlimactic, there seemed to be a feeling among connoisseurs that it was not the best evening of opera Vienna had ever enjoyed—very good opera, even by the high Viennese standards, but not the absolute best. The reason for this was obvious. Ever since the war, the State Opera had been housed in the small Theater an der Wien, which was not suitable for presenting spectacular grand opera, and had therefore grown accustomed to putting on works of an intimate nature, like Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro" and "Così fan Tutte" and Strauss's "Ariadne auf Naxos" and "Elektra." Some music lovers felt that there were moments during the first night in the new house when the potentialities of its sound and stage were not fully exploited. But nearly everyone agreed that the orchestra was magnificent. And the acoustics—that unpredictable mystery of physics over which the designers, along with everybody else in Vienna, had been worrying for months—proved to be better than the most optimistic had dared hope, better even than the acoustics in the former State Opera House.

THOSE who missed the opera opening needn't despair. There will be plenty of good music during the rest of the season in Austria, and especially music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who was born in Salzburg on January 27, 1756. Salzburg is planning to go all out in honoring the bicentennial of its most illustrious son's birth. The city has scheduled its first "winter festival" for this year, and on the composer's two-hundredth birthday, his musical Masses will be played and sung in the city's churches and in St. Stephen's Cathedral, where he was concertmaster. The Austrian government, headed by President Körner, will commemorate the day at a ceremony in the Salzburg Festival House; another cere-

mony will be held at Getreidegasse 9, in the house where Mozart was born; and that night there will be a performance of "Idomeneo" at the Festival House.

Nor will Mozart be forgotten elsewhere. During the Vienna annual "Festival Weeks" next June, his symphonic works will be performed by the Vienna Philharmonic, the Wiener Symphoniker, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Prague Philharmonic, and the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra. All over Austria, special performances are being contemplated—in cities, in towns, and even in hamlets. Orchestras will perform his symphonies, chamber-music groups his quartets, singers his songs, instrumentalists his concertos, churches his sacred music, the Court Music Choir of Vienna his Masses. The Austrian Academy of Sciences is planning an International Mozart Congress; a competition in Mozart interpretation will be held in Salzburg; the Central Institute for Mozart Research will convene at the International Mozart Foundation, in Salzburg; and everywhere there will be readings of Mozart's letters, showings of Mozart films, unveilings of Mozart memorial plaques. By the time the bicentennial comes to a close—with a performance in the Cathedral of Mozart's Requiem on the hundred-and-sixty-fifth anniversary of his death—the air over Austria should be thoroughly saturated with Mozart's music and the country considerably richer as a result of tourist spending. One other ceremony in connection with the bicentennial should probably also be mentioned. On December 5th, a wreath will be laid on the turf of St. Marx Cemetery, in Vienna—the cemetery where Mozart was buried during a blizzard on December 6, 1791. His widow, Constanze, could afford nothing better than a third-class funeral, costing eight florins, thirty-six kreuzer, and she was sick herself and could not attend. Only a few friends walked behind the carriage bearing the coffin, and even they gave up halfway, when the weather got worse. Mozart's body was tossed into a common grave for paupers, and no one knows where he lies.

—Joseph Wechsberg

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