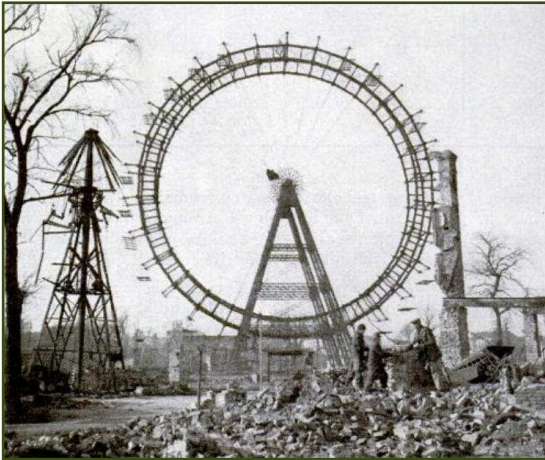


An American in Allied-occupied Austria: John Dos Passos Reports on Postwar Vienna



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January 24, 2014

Allied-occupied Austria

- Red Army crosses into Austria at Klostermarienberg in Burgenland on March 29
- 3rd Ukrainian Front under Marshal Fyodor Tolbukhin liberates Vienna on April 13
- Provisional government formed by Karl Renner on April 20
- All hostilities in Austria terminated by May 8
- First Allied Control Agreement on Austria signed on July 4
- Austria divided into 4 occupation zones, each governed by military commissioner
- Vienna subdivided in 4 sectors, with inner city jointly administered by Allied Control Council

John Dos Passos

- Born on January 14, 1896 in Chicago
- Attends Harvard College, graduating in 1916
- Serves in American Volunteer Motor Ambulance Corps during Great War
- First novels, *One Man's Initiation: 1917* (1920) and *Three Soldiers* (1921), based on war experiences
- Best known for modernist fiction *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) and *U.S.A. Trilogy* (1938)
- Evolves from left-wing activist to right-wing propagandist
- Dies on September 28, 1970 in Baltimore

John Dos Passos in Allied-occupied Austria

- Works as war correspondent for United States Army from December 1944 to April 1945 in South Pacific
- Sails to Europe in October 1945 to cover Nazi Trials for LIFE magazine, starting on November 20 in Nuremberg
- Sets out from military camp in Bad Wiessee, Bavaria on November 8 to visit Allied-occupied Austria
- Spends night in Linz, where American and Russian occupation zones meet
- Goes on to Vienna next day and stays until November 10
- Returns to USA in December 1945

John Dos Passos Reports on Postwar Vienna

- “The Vienna Frontier”: published by Houghton Mifflin Company in *Tour of Duty*, a collection of 13 reports on war in Pacific and postwar time in Europe, on August 20, 1946
- “Vienna: Broken City”: abridged version released in LIFE magazine (Vol. 20, No. 9) on March 4, 1946
- 11 photos included: 10 by LIFE staff photographer John Phillips in early autumn 1945, and 1 by Associated Press



Frontier in Allied-occupied Austria

- Dos Passos' report on his journey across Allied-occupied Austria resonates with inverted frontier myth
- Hungarians returning East in covered wagons recall settlers going West in prairie schooners
- Divided city of Linz appears as last outpost of civilization
- American GIs are described as cowboys with guns
- Red Army soldiers are dismissed as culturally less advanced, as "kinder crude"
- Passage from American to Russian occupation zone over Ennstalbrücke marks entry into wilderness

Russians as Crude Slavs

- No direct contacts established with Red Army soldiers en route
- Dos Passos sees them through eyes of 19th-century art and literature
- A Red Army officer is presented as Russian landowner, “bowling along in an ancient victoria with a yellow wicker body” while driver resembles serf, “the flatfaced izvozchik of all the droshkies in Russian literature”
- Rank-and-file soldiers are stereotypically cast as Russian souls: “bigeyed young Slavs who had an appealing coltish look of being right out of the isba”, “staring at you the while with a cowlike stare off the great steppes”
- Passing Red Army soldiers on way to Vienna, Dos Passos is reminded of “all the choruses in all the Russian operas I’d ever seen”

Russians as Sly Communists

- In Vienna Dos Passos adopts view of Russians as antagonists
- First hard to get in contact with Red Army soldiers because
 - “for nearly 30 years now the only view of the world outside the Soviet Union its citizens have had has been through the distorting prism of Marxist propaganda”
 - “any contact with foreigners will be misinterpreted by the dangerous snoopers of the NKVD”
- Argument ensues about equality and democracy with Red Army major, a Ukrainian schoolteacher specialized in American literature
- Major is depicted “as suspicious of his capitalist friends as a Connecticut farmer out with a bunch of bookmakers”
- More generally, American GIs complain about “the arrogance and the double-dealing and the lack of regard for the rights of man of the Russians” and “the art of international poker, Russian style”

Vienna as Home to Music and Theater

- Although Vienna is in ruins, Dos Passos' perceptions of city are colored by image found in 19th-century literature
- The Vienna Boys' Choir sings Schubert Masses in Hofburg
- Theaters are open, concerts are played, clubs put on songs and sketches
- Cafés are full of people reading newspapers over cups of ersatz coffee
- In line with image of Vienna as “an old musical comedy queen“, city seems pervaded by a sense of staginess:
 - Changing of guard at Kommandatura is similar to “a military show” that bystanders take in “with a certain rapture”
 - People in police station have “faces out of an oldfashioned Punch and Judy show”
 - Police inspector looks like “an elocution teacher trying to rehearse a highschool play when the cast is getting out of hand”

Austria as Mediator Between East and West

- Dos Passos hears a man speak about Austria's role in foreign affairs: "Vienna as the capital of a new Austrian republic will find new life as an interpreter and filter between the eastern Europe that will grow up with its face turned toward Moscow and the western Europe that will grow up with its face turned toward Washington"
- Schools teach foreign languages in preparation for future. Vienna school principal declares: " We are intensifying the study of English and in the higher grades Russian"
- Scene in police station has Austrian inspector communicate with Russian and French occupation forces, thereby illustrating and anticipating Austria's function in Cold War

How Austrians View Others and Themselves

- Dos Passos learns from Austrian journalist that Viennese are disappointed in their liberators/occupiers because their expectations were not met
- Viennese like US military commissioner General Mark Clark for his good looks and consider Americans their friends, expecting food in return
- But they fear Russians, especially Soviet Union's deputy military commissioner General Aleksei Zheltov, "the big bullnecked man from the Kremlin", associating them with repression and violence, looting and raping
- Vienna school principal denies any involvement with Nazism: "Politics is alien to pedagogy"
- In accordance with Moscow Declaration, Austria is viewed (and comes to view itself) as Hitler's first victim

Summary and Conclusion

- John Dos Passos uses literary metaphors, stereotypes and images well-known to Americans
 - Allied-occupied Austria as frontier country
 - Russians as crude Slavs and sly communists
 - Vienna as home to music and theater
- to give a pre-Cold War view of post-World War II Vienna
 - Characterizing Americans as liberators/friends
 - Identifying Russians as occupiers/enemies
 - Defining Austrians as different from Germans/Nazis

Thank you for your attention!

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