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Vienna Still Teems With Rabid Nazis.

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Wednesday, May 15, 1946

Newsletter:

Vienna Still Teems With Rabid Nazis

By Klaus Mann
Staff Writer

(Second in a series of
articles from Vienna).

VIENNA—The Austrian capital seems to have settled down to some kind of shabby normalcy. Day-by-day life functions in a rather smooth, orderly manner, even though various jealousies and disagreements among Allied occupation authorities (particularly between Russians and Anglo-Americans) complicates the job of city administration.

But there is no anarchy, no chaos, no spectacular misery. Beggars are remarkably rare. Infrequently a kid may ask you for some "Kaugummi" (chewing gum) or a desperate tobacco addict may reach for your half-smoked cigarette.

AUSTRIA NOT POISONED

There can be no doubt that Vienna is in better shape than any of the centers in Germany proper. In Germany there seems to be a moral vacuum—the ideal breeding ground for a still virulent Nazi bacillus. Everything German has somehow been tainted by Nazism. The Reich is today a thoroughly poisoned, corrupted country. Austrians, on the other hand, have certain traditions of their own—cosmopolitan, highly civilized, anti-Prussian—which they proudly remember and are now trying to re-establish.

That is not to say that there have been no Austrian Nazis. There were plenty of them. Pretty nasty ones, too! Have they all changed their minds and become reliable democrats?

The answer is—no.

Vienna is still teeming with pro-German fanatics and disgruntled reactionaries. A Viennese woman I know—a trustworthy anti-Nazi and former member of the Austrian Resistance—told me that she is practically an outcast among her neighbors because of her political views.

FLIMSY ACCUSATIONS

Many Austrians, in the capital and elsewhere, still think along the lines of Goebbels' propaganda. They will tell you that they have nothing against the Anglo-Americans but detest the Russians. However, when you check on their atrocity stories describing Red Army soldiers as ravenous beasts, you learn, more often than not, that such accusations are based on the most flimsy evidence.

Again, there are others who profess great sympathy for Communism but despise democracy. But scratch some of those would-be radicals, and you discover the old Nazi ideology under a thin surface of revolutionary phrases. They are like the red flags displayed in Vienna on Liberation Day. Most of them were former Nazi banners, with the circle containing the black swastika simply painted over. A few drops of red color do the trick.

And yet, even the most skeptical observer will have to admit that Austria is not quite Germany. Conditions in Vienna are better, from a political and moral point of view, than they are in Berlin. However impoverished and paralyzed this great city on the Danube River may be right now, it is not impossible to visualize its future return as one of Europe's cultural and economic centers.

Vienna, more than a year after its liberation, doesn't look too good. But it doesn't look hopeless, either.