

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

In: The Message. 28.10.1943.

Cities in the News. Vienna.

Mann, Klaus

1943-10-28

Nutzungsbedingungen

Bei zahlreichen Dokumenten auf monacensia-digital.de sind die Urheberrechte bereits abgelaufen. Sie sind gemeinfrei und dürfen ohne weitere Rücksprache mit der Monacensia weiterverwendet werden.

Bei den Dokumenten, bei denen noch Urheberrechte bestehen, müssen für eine Weiterverwendung stets die Rechteinhaber*innen angefragt werden sowie eine Publikationsgenehmigung der Monacensia eingeholt werden. Das Zitatrecht bleibt hiervon unberührt.

Zur Erteilung einer Publikationserlaubnis wenden Sie sich bitte an:

Monacensia im Hildebrandhaus

Literaturarchiv

Adresse: Maria-Theresia-Straße 23, 81675 München

E-Mail: monacensia.literaturarchiv@muenchen.de

Terms of use

The copyrights for numerous documents on monacensia-digital.de have already expired. They are in the public domain and may be reused without further consultation with Monacensia. In the case of documents for which copyrights still exist, the copyright holders must always be contacted for further use and publication permission must be obtained from the Monacensia. The right to quote under copyright law remains unaffected by this. To obtain permission for publication, please contact:

Monacensia im Hildebrandhaus:

Literaturarchiv

Address: Maria-Theresia-Straße 23, 81675 München

E-Mail: monacensia.literaturarchiv@muenchen.de

Oct. 28

CITIES IN THE NEWS VIENNA

By T/S KLAUS MANN.

What does come first to your mind when you hear or read the name of the Austrian capital? Music. . . . The very notion of Vienna is imbued with melodies and gently compelling rhythms.

Vienna—that is the city of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert; the city of Johann Strauss and his inspired successors, who enchanted, bewitched the world with the sensual charm of their waltzes.

According to the cliché of Broadway and Hollywood, the people of Vienna seem constantly occupied with singing and dancing. With dogged enthusiasm, they keep capering and jubiling in their sumptuous ballrooms and cafe houses; along the famous Ring Strasse—main boulevard of the capital; around the towering mass of Saint Stephen's cathedral; on the banks of the "beautiful blue Danube;" out in the fabulous "Prater," a spacious public park and amusement area. Waltz-intoxicated, possessed by an exorbitant zest of life, saucy Viennese comfesses (as conceived by the authors of innumerable musical comedies) amuse themselves with jolly old coachmen, called "flakers," while dashing archdukes make love to sweet ingenues from the popular suburbs. At the last moment, when the archdukes and the comfesses seem on the point of getting themselves into troubles, Emperor Franz Joseph shows up—all silver whiskers and paternal benevolence—and blesses his ever-dancing, ever-singing people.

The charm of Vienna—its "golden heart" and melodious genius—has been almost unbearably over-publicized. The real fascination of Vienna is less sweet and less vulgar than the film producers try to make us believe. Far from being the somewhat monotonous paradise of unending flirtations and masked balls, Vienna is indeed one of the most complex and most problematic centers of European civilization—much less happily balanced and less harmonious than Paris; more sensitive and more aristocratic than its robust and dynamic rival, Berlin.

Berlin is young and ambitious; Vienna is old, experienced, mellow, skeptical. Its playful serenity is a front—pleasing, polite, diplomatic. The true face of Vienna is marked by suffering, laden with contradictory features. Its character has been shaped by a multitude of influences—French, Germanic, Slavic, Spanish and Italian. Situated in the center of the continent, Vienna was for centuries the meeting place of East, North and South—the spot where elements from the Teutonic world, from the Balkans and from the Latin countries fused into a new, creative entity.

Vienna was powerful, but it was always threatened. First, the menace came from the Eastern barbarians. In the year of 450, Attila conquered and pillaged the city; in 1529, and again in 1683, Vienna proved the last, decisive bulwark against the attack of the Turks—

thus saving the Occident from being submerged, devoured by Asia.

Then it was Prussia, in the person of Frederick II, which challenged Austria and Vienna—represented, at that time, by the most illustrious, most engaging monarch whom the House of Hapsburg has ever produced: Empress Maria Theresia. Prussia came out victorious, but Austria remained strong—strong enough to resist Napoleon half a century later, and to play an important role in his final defeat. That was the era of Prince Metternich's obscurant and reactionary, if bold and sagacious, intrigues; of the Congress of Vienna and the Holy Alliance—including Prussia, Russia and Austria.

The Vienna of the later nineteenth century was lacking in the glorious initiative which it had commanded in the days of Prince Eugene—victor against the Turks—and of Empress Maria Theresia. The Hapsburg empire—still vast and seemingly contented under Austria's sway—was ruled with the help of an enormous bureaucratic apparatus concentrated in the capital.

Emperor Franz Joseph was by no means the good-natured dad whom we know from "The White-Horse Inn" and similar sugary farces. He was hard, pedantic, rigidly bigoted. Many of his subjects—the Czechs, the Serbs, the Slovaks and the Poles—secretly hated him. During the long years of his government, the empire became gradually ripe for its disintegration. Of course, Vienna still flourished and radiated—dazzling with its traditional glamour and gaiety. But under the brilliant surface a very different mood began to grow and finally became predominant—a sense of imminent doom.

Vienna experienced something like a cultural renaissance, about the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; its musical, theatrical and literary productivity seemed to reach a new climax. But a strange vein of resignation and weariness is inherent in this display of inspired subtleties. In the midst of caprices and frivolities there is always a shadow, an ominous undertone—the consciousness of inevitable disaster.

No other city was as cruelly affected by the German defeat of 1918 as was Vienna—now an imperial capital without an empire. The monumental buildings of the Ring Strasse—representative palaces, with nothing to represent—seemed to mock the misery of the people. Vienna was deprived, not only of its main sources of material income and influence, but also of its rank and function in the world.

True, the competent administration of the Social Democrats improved the social conditions, especially the housing situation. Besides, Vienna's attraction to the international tourists proved indestructible, and the fashionable hotels and restaurants began to prosper again. Yet the position of the capital was untenable—half-

concealed, but not mitigated, by the traditional Viennese skepticism and smiling nonchalance. "Over there, in Germany," the people of Vienna said, "the situation may be serious, but it is certainly not altogether hopeless. Here, in Vienna, the situation may be hopeless, but it isn't really serious."

It became serious—alarmingly and desperately so—when Hitler established himself as the dictator of Germany—Hitler, the Austrian, the frustrated painter from Braunau, who had once come to Vienna as a penniless vagabond, spending his time in the asylums for the poor and similar dreary places. Vienna and Hitler never liked each other. But the Austrian hillbillies—the folks from Graz, Linz and Salzburg—believed in the Nazi leader, whom they recognized and admired as one from their own ilk.

Vienna might have become the citadel of anti-Nazi resistance in Austria, indeed, in Central Europe, if it had not been for the short-sighted, reactionary policy of Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss and his successor, Schuschnigg, who tried to wage a hopeless two-front war—fighting not only German Nazism but also Austrian labor. So the inevitable took place, in the spring of 1938—the Nazi invasion and annexation of Austria.

Will Vienna ever sing and dance again? Will it regain its place and dignity in a liberated, re-organized Europe? This question is of vital significance. For an embittered, poverty-stricken, isolated Vienna would be apt to perturb and infect the whole Central-European area with its smoldering discontent and frustrated ambitions. In a more reasonable European scheme, however, the same city might play, once again, a stimulating and constructive part, in virtue of its singular geographic-cultural position, its glorious past, its beauty and its innate genius.

Learn to conceal yourself. Concealment is successful only when your camouflage becomes an actual part of the background.