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Berlin and Vienna...

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BERLIN AND VIENNA...

An article about general living conditions, political currents, cultural activities, and some leading or characteristic personalities in the two German-speaking capitals.

Resemblances and differences: Both cities badly hurt by the War, both impoverished and humiliated, both disconnected from the surrounding country, both under the not-too-smoothly-functioning control of a Four-Power Military Government.

But if Berlin has been practically destroyed, Vienna has remained comparatively well-preserved; if the former capital of the Reich is today worse off -- economically as well as morally and politically -- than it was in 1946, the former center of the Habsburg monarchy seems to recover much more speedily. -- Berlin has been conquered; Vienna, "liberated." -- While Vienna is the seat of an internationally recognized government (I had a long personal interview with the head of the new Austrian State, Bundespräsident Dr. Karl Renner -- to be described in detail), Berlin is today a ghost capital without any power, any "raison d'être." -- The political tension between East and West, the conflict between the former Allies is much more dramatically, more alarmingly noticeable in Berlin than it is in Vienna. -- In Vienna, where the Communists constitute only a relatively small minority, the ruling coalition of anti-Communist Socialists and conservative Catholics seems to represent the majority of the people. Berlin, with its strong Communist Party, faces a more complex and more critical political situation.

Even though the people of Vienna are fully aware of the difficulties and dangers confronting them, they appear, on the whole, much more buoyant and optimistic than the nervous, gloomy ~~Berliners~~ Berliners. Whereas a nihilistic, apocalyptic mood prevails in the Prussian metropolis -- a mood which manifests itself, at times quite effectively, in recent theatrical productions, films, paintings, poems, etc. --, Vienna, on the contrary, bravely tries to keep up its traditional serenity and elegant self-assurance. If the Berliners recognize their own drama, not without a certain grim pride, in Richard Wagner's pompous tragedy, "~~The~~" Twilight of the Gods," the Viennese seek, and at times seem to find, comfort and inspiration in Mozart's more detached, more humane, more discreet and civilized music.

PRAGUE AND VIENNA...

Prague, the most advanced bastion of the East; Vienna, the most eastern stronghold of the West.
Comparison between general living conditions and political, cultural currents in the two capitals.
Conversations with some leading men and average citizens in Prague and Vienna.
Vienna's reaction to the recent coup in Czechoslovakia. (Remarkable absence of panic.)
In spite of the Iron Curtain, the traditional ties between the two capitals are not yet quite disrupted.
Closer collaboration between Czechoslovakia and Austria to be desired, and expected, in the United Europe of the future.

PORTRAIT OF PRAGUE...

Impressions during my recent visit: general appearance of the city, living conditions (food, housing, prices etc.), cultural activities, conversations with some leading men and average citizens.
Prague, the city between East and West...
The cruel dilemma confronting the Czech people. -- The Jan Masaryk tragedy as a symbol: the very conflict which made him take his own life is now being experienced, day after day, by millions of progressive, democratic Czechs. Hence the bombshell effect of the suicide news -- an effect I witnessed in person. (Description of the State funeral: the grieved masses, Premier Gottwald's speech, President Benes's pathetic appearance.)
Prospects. Is Prague lost to western civilization?

RECOVERY IN THE NETHERLANDS...

General picture of Amsterdam, where I had my "headquarters" during my recent one-year stay in Europe.
The process of recovery and rehabilitation in The Netherlands has been slowed down, first, by the tense international situation and, secondly, by the costly, unpopular colonial war in Indonesia. -- Some remarks about the political background and history of the Indonesian crisis.
The political setup in Holland. (Socialist-Catholic coalition; the Communists, fairly strong in the major cities.)
Prestige and popularity of Queen Wilhelmina, who recently abdicated in favour of her daughter, Princess Juliana. (The jubilee of the queen's reign will be celebrated next September -- which may make this article particularly timely and pertinent.)
Neo-Fascist currents and undercurrents. Personal experiences.
The Netherlands and her neighbours. (The German problem. "Benelux;" Henri Spaak's recent visit.)
Cultural activities. (The literary scene. Musical life; the sad case of the great conductor Mengelberg -- now banned as a quisling.)