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Report on the Salzburg Seminar in  
American Civilization

• July - August 1947

Academic Standards: The question of lectures and seminars ought to be given a prominent place in any report on Leopoldskron. Sufficient emphasis was laid on this point at the last seminar meeting to make it worth thinking over in terms of the future. We undoubtedly have all learnt a lot from the lectures. I do not think, personally, that the academic standard of the lectures ought to be raised. We know very little about America, and, even in our own field, the courses we were given this summer have set us thinking and working and we have now sufficient data to start specialising on any question that may have most aroused our interest. There is another reason why I do not consider it advisable to raise the academic standard of the lectures. We have had a chance, this year, to get acquainted with other aspects of the American Civilisation than the ones our profession helps to understand. I must say, personally, that I was sincerely grateful to Prof. Leontiev, and his assistants for giving me such a clear outline of American Economics without frightening me out of the library with technicalities. Many of the European students of economics seemed as pleased as myself with the general scheme of the lectures. The reason must be, as I said before, that America is still a new field for many of our college people, however startling this may seem.

The seminars, however, are the place for a more thorough and elaborate study of the subjects. The professor can "feel the pulse" of his group and lead the discussion as far and as deep as possible, I think that, in this respect, no specialisation could be called excessive. The students should be made to take part in the discussion. Too many people were silent at the seminars this year. Was the level too high for them? Were they just shy? Something should be devised for them. Maybe the professor could point out several difficulties of the next lectures to be discussed, and ask these people to think about some of them. This would not mean writing a paper, but it would warn those students that their turn to speak is to come at the next session on such and such a question. A team work system might solve the difficulty of getting everyone to do his bit. Small groups could, under the supervision of the assistant, prepare a lecture on a subject that has not been developed by the professor. Many more suggestions could be made about the seminars. The ones I just mentioned refer to the seminars in literature. I think the question system is quite good and should be kept as a whole.

Programme:

The general schedule of the lectures was, in my opinion, entirely satisfactory. I cannot think of any subject of importance that should be added to it.

The question of limiting the programme to American Civilization, or of extending it to European subjects is also an important one. My opinion is that the Seminar should remain a "Seminar in American Civilization". It is very useful as such. But some lectures on Europe, by

## II.

European professors, would be welcome too. Maybe we could have heard more about Austrian and Central European culture and problems. Austria is a very interesting country, so rich in lessons of all kinds. Why could not the Austrian graduates of the Seminar talk, quite informally, about their country? Why should European professors who lecture at the Castle choose American subjects?

The programme for literature was almost perfect. I was too eager to get to the analysis of contemporary literature to be enthusiastic about Henry Adams, f.i., and I think we did not have enough of contemporary literature, but this is quite a personal view, a matter of taste.

### Social Life:

I think the way we all got along together at Leopoldskron is one of the most inspiring experiences of all. It cannot be by chance that the people picked up for this Seminar were so interested and envious about one another. There is, and it was glorious to discover it, in our war battered, skeptical Europe, a real hunger for international understanding and friendship. I may sound lyrical but I do not forget the grouping of sympathies, the political quibbles, the incidents. But, taking everything into account, I consider that the atmosphere was by far more harmonious than could have been expected, and I feel tempted to draw optimistic conclusions about the world's future. This is the first time that I have had a chance to feel that way since V Day!

The dormitory system may have its drawbacks, but I think that Leopoldskron ought to stick to it. This community life is so rich in experiences, it is a good test for smoothing out national prejudices.

I also think the atmosphere of freedom, of free choice of personal amusements, should be kept. It is just sufficient to make up for the lack of individual, solitary life in the castle itself. However, somebody might explain to the students, at the very beginning, what excursions can be made, how long the trip would take, what arrangements are to be made, etc. This would be an occasion to print out that it is advisable not to leave the castle during the week, that one or two Saturdays are left free for the purpose of excursions. (My personal idea would be to leave every Saturday free, even by overcharging a little the schedule for the other days. Austria is a beautiful country, and the strain of attending lectures and seminars in a foreign language makes a relaxation necessary.)

The concerts at the castle were a splendid idea.

### Selection of Students:

I consider that the universities should be preferred, as selecting bodies, to any other institutions, including the I.S.S. The organisers can give to the university Rectors a sufficiently accurate description of the Seminar to make a good selection possible. The questionnaires can be made as detailed as possible, to give a fair account of the students' personalities. I am in favour of accepting senior university students with a good academic report, and graduate workers. At any rate, I should choose 18 or even 20 as the minimum age.

### III.

#### Material conditions:

The dining-room, the dormitories, the bathrooms, the lounge were absolutely satisfactory. I think the working rooms (Chinese room, etc.) might be provided with smaller tables, as to afford a solitary corner for those who study.

An infirmary is absolutely necessary, and a sufficient supply of drugs.

The homelike atmosphere of the lounge, which was not only brought about by the sandwiches and coca-cola, is a thing to be developed; community singing, piano playing, talking by candle-light, this also was Leopoldskron at its best.

The list of books to be read should be sent in advance to the members.

Last but not least, I think the American students should not have the bulk of the administrative work to do. Could the Seminar afford a small clerical staff? Could not the guests help? We did not have enough contact with the American students. More of them would be wanted!

I can sincerely sum up this report by saying enthusiastically how much I appreciated the whole thing, the lectures, the atmosphere of friendship, the lovely surroundings (I do not imagine a more appropriate place than Austria, Salzburg, and Leopoldskron), the relations between students and professors, the efforts of the organising team to make it a success. I shall not forget Leopoldskron, however gloomy the world may keep turning. It was grand!

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