

Austria's Agriculture Strives for Self-Support

MAURICE CORE

As a recent International Farm Youth Exchange student, Maurice Core, of Ames, Iowa, worked and lived in close contact with rural people in Austria. He found that they, and we, have very similar goals.

ON June 11, 1950, I was one of forty-two American Farm Youth who left Washington, D.C., for thirteen European countries where we spent four and a half months living, working and playing with farm families abroad. We were under the International Farm Youth Exchange Program which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in cooperation with the Extension Service and our State Department. However, this program is financed by individual contributions from 4-H and Rural Youth club members. Its purpose is, of course, to build a better understanding among rural people the world over which we hope will be a stepping stone towards world peace. Last year in return we had forty-two exchange students who came to America under this program to spend their summer.

I visited the small country of Austria and found the farmers struggling today in an attempt to make their country self-sufficient, a feat they have never as yet accomplished. This is an enormous task for them considering the problems that must be faced: Geographical, economic and political factors stand in the way of national recovery.

Austria, with an area of 32,369 square miles and a population of just over

seven million, is approximately one-half as large as Iowa and has nearly three times as many people. About two million of these or nearly one-third the total population live in the capital city.

Marshall Plan at Work

At present, Austria's agriculture can provide 65 per cent of the country's food needs. However, given necessary imports of high quality seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, Austria could again become 70-80 per cent self-sufficient. Through the Marshall Plan, Austria is getting some of these imports and with them this struggling European state hopes to surpass pre-war production levels.

Seventy-three per cent of the country is mountainous. This makes Austria's task of feeding its own people very difficult.

Living standards are still low in Austria. We must remember, however, that her people have been through two wars in the last forty years, and that her present condition arose partly from the division in 1918 of her once large, rich empire. In 1938 Germany gained control of many of her factories and used these for war production. When Russia entered Austria in 1945, the Russians took over these same factories.



Courtesy, U. S. Information Service

Hand tools such as the scythe are still widely used in Austria. Maurice and Earl find them more strenuous, more picturesque, much less productive than the mowing machines they have used back in the States.

The average farm in Austria consists of 35-40 acres. Most of the farming is done in the valleys and low lands, and in general, the steepest mountain slopes are used for pasture, hay and timber.

But a small portion of the farming is done on the mountain sides. It was surprising to see the unusual practice of farmers cultivating 40-60 degree slopes—and with good results. The erosion on these slopes was unexpectedly slight. The light rainfall apparently was an important factor in this deviation from what might be expected of land cultivated under similar conditions in the United States.

Plows are pulled up many of these slopes by an electric motor and system of cables which is a great step in mechanization for the farmers. The cost of this operation is slight because water power is Austria's largest natural resource.

The natural fertility of the soil is low, but the yields are good due to the large amount of commercial fertilizer, liquid manure and manure that is applied to the depleted soil. Conservation is a must for the Austrians, not a mere matter of choice. Important crops grown are potatoes, sugar beets, wheat, rye and oats. The small amount of corn which is grown is used mainly for silage.

Food Is Now Sufficient

On nearly all of the farms livestock products account for 50-60 per cent of the gross income. Austria's dairy production plays the number one part, as many mountainous areas are more suitable for cattle breeding than for crop production.

Most of the farm buildings are constructed of brick and stone, built to last several hundred years. The continental practice of arranging farm structures in a square still prevails in some areas. The home is built on one side, the cattle and swine stables are next door and the machinery shed completes the

structure. This method of structural arrangement was started centuries ago for protection. Its greatest disadvantage is the fire hazard it presents.

The people of Austria have sufficient food today, but in general the diet of the people is lacking in proper balance of vitamins and protein. It is composed largely of carbohydrate foods. A typical meal on the average farm consists of boiled potatoes, kraut, heavy black bread, and most (hard cider). The bread is made from potatoes, rye, barley and wheat. One loaf weighed two and one-quarter kilograms, or five pounds.

On the last farm I visited, approximately 20 loaves, or 100 pounds of



Courtesy, U. S. Information Service

Austrian farm laborers were amused by the fact that two American youths had come to work with them in the fields. Earl Peace, from Montana, and Maurice Core, from Iowa, help with the potato crop.

bread were baked per week. This plainly shows the main constituent of the farmer's diet. The hard cider is three to four percent alcohol. On some farms you might say it is used by the people as a substitute for water and milk, because it is about the only beverage they drink. On one farm 30,000 gallons of apple and pear juice were stored in the wine cellar in the fall for the following year's consumption.

In all probability the future of no other country in Europe depends as much on Marshall Plan aid as does Austria's. Today over 90 percent of her aid money goes into rebuilding and increasing her over-all productive capacity. From my own observation it seems

that Austria's modern history of political struggle has shown the majority of her people that accepting this help from the western world is the best possible way for her to survive as a free country.

As an American I was treated well all summer. It was very hard for me to find any differences between the rural people of Austria and ours here in America. Of course their homes were different, also their customs and dress. I think our entire group of exchange students returning last fall decided that basically the world over the rural people are striving for the same goals in better homes, schools, churches and most of all a peaceful world to live in.

World-Mindedness in the Youngest

BEAUVOIR SCHOOL STAFF¹

How can a school foster world-mindedness in younger children? This article describes a program through which the staff of Beauvoir School, Washington, D. C., guided by Elizabeth Taylor, principal, initiated and encouraged a world outlook among boys and girls in the early grades.

WE DO NOT KNOW whether life exists on any other planet but we do know it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain life on our own planet. If world fellowship does not prevail, presumably the atom bomb will. The desperate need in the world today is not for criticism alone but for more constructive, creative action. This need concerns every individual more than it ever has before in history. The task of the teacher is therefore seen in a new perspective: individuals more

than ever must be educated toward fuller relationship to one another. With today's child the relation to others must include not only those children at the adjoining desks at school, the parents at home, the children and grown-ups of the immediate neighborhood, city and nation, but must extend to the children and grown-ups of the whole world.

It is necessary not only to know about but eventually to develop genuine kinship with unseen millions. This is the great challenge at present to all world-conscious educators.

¹ Compiled by Ruth Watt under direction of Ruth Beebe.

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