

"The Salzburg Seminar- A Community of Fellows" **Written by Dr. Timothy W. Ryback, Director of the Salzburg Seminar.**

Over the centuries, Schloss Leopoldskron has provided accommodation to the vanities and fantasies of its various owners, be it to be a showcase of the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg, to realize the financial aspirations of two ambitious waiters or to provide expression to the lavish tastes of a theatrical genius. In the years immediately following the Second World War, Schloss Leopoldskron became resident to the "vision" of three young men from Harvard University who set out to create a center for intellectual exchange in the heart of Europe.

Five decades later, this "vision" has developed into one of Europe's foremost forums for the discussion of global issues, bringing together future leaders from around the world to meet and work with prominent individuals from virtually every realm of human endeavour: politics, economics, social and environmental concerns, the arts and academia. "There are hundreds of seminars in the prestige-conscious firmament of academe," *Newsweek* magazine has written, "but few can rival the eminence of the Salzburg program."

Legend has it that the Salzburg Seminar was born one winter day on a New York subway. It was there, early in 1947, that Clemens Heller, a graduate student at Harvard University, encountered Helene Thinig, the widow of Max Reinhardt. Heller was the son of Hugo Heller, the prosperous Viennese publisher who had first published the works of Sigmund Freud and had been a frequent guest of Reinhardt at Schloss Leopoldskron during the 1920s and 1930s.

Clemens Heller, who had been a student of Thinig at the Max Reinhardt Seminar for Performing Arts in Vienna, explained to her that he was organizing a summer seminar "in Europe that would bring together students from across the war-ravaged continent in an effort to renew intellectual dialogue among individuals who had been divided by totalitarianism and war. In 1947, it seemed a bold if not frivolous idea.

With the Second World War less than two years behind them, many Europeans were still struggling for basic survival. Food was in desperately short supply. Hundreds of thousands of displaced persons still wandered the continent. Germany and Austria, whose cities lay in ruins, had been divided into zones of military occupation.

At the same time, tensions were increasing among the former Allies as relations polarized between the United States and the Soviet Union. That spring, at a commencement exercise in Fulton, Missouri, Winston Churchill had warned that an "iron curtain" had descended across the continent.

Despite the immense material and political obstacles, Clemens Heller, who was joined in his undertaking by two other Harvard men, a college senior named Richard Campbell and a young English instructor named Scott Elledge, worked to realize his idea.

"We hope to create at least one small center in which young Europeans from all countries, and of all political convictions, could meet for a month in concrete work under favorable living conditions," Campbell said of their intentions in January of 1947, "and to lay the foundation for a possible permanent center of intellectual discussion in Europe." The seminar, the three had determined, would focus on introducing American civilization in all its facets--its culture, its politics, and its economy, to the young generation of post-war Europe.

When Heller and company approached Harvard President James B. Conant with the hope of obtaining university funding for the project, their proposal, which was deemed "too idealistic, too impractical, too premature" was dismissed out of hand. "You know they came to me right from the beginning," Conant later confided to a friend. "They asked me if I would sponsor the summer school they were planning. I told them I wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole."

Undeterred, the three young men appealed to the Harvard Student Council for assistance. The Council pledged \$2,000 in cash and \$4,000 worth of provisions from a university food drive. At the same time, they secured the cooperation of the International Student Service in Geneva. With a clear vision, administrative zeal, and modest but adequate financial support from private donors, the planned "seminar" had everything but a suitable location in which the students could work under "favorable conditions."

It was at this juncture that Heller encountered Helene Thimig and informed her of the intended project. Although the exchange between Thimig and Heller has never been substantiated (Heller remains discretely evasive on the matter). Seminar lore has it that Thimig, whose husband had died four years earlier and who seemed to have had no intention of taking up residence in Salzburg again, listened to Clemens Heller with rapt attention. Then, with a grand gesture of enthusiasm, she exclaimed, "Why you must hold it at Schloss Leopoldskron!"

From this legendary exchange in a New York City subway, the bond was forged between Schloss Leopoldskron and the "Salzburg Seminar in American Civilization." (The name was later officially registered as the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies)

By the spring of 1947, Heller had been able to assemble an eminent faculty for the summer program. It included the anthropologist Margaret Mead, economist Wassily Leontief, and literary historian F. O. Matthiessen, known among his associates simply as "Matty." In April, the final obstacle was removed when the project was given official clearance by both the Austrian Government and the Allied Military Government.

Schloss Leopoldskron itself, however, was hardly ready for this new chapter in its history. Following the German Anschluss of Austria in 1938, the Schloss and all Reinhardt's property had been declared a *volks- und staatsfeindliches Vermögen*: property owned by an enemy of the people and the state and was confiscated by the Reich.

Schloss Leopoldskron was an attractive acquisition and there followed a struggle among local factions of the Nazi Party for use of the facility. One group wished to convert the Meierhof building into a sports training facility. The Schloss itself was to be used first for a Party training school, then as a "home" for artists visiting Salzburg. Bickering ensued between various local offices over the rights to the Reinhardt library collection.

By summer, the matter was settled when Herman Göring, with the express permission of Hitler, ordered the Schloss to be handed over to Princess Stephanie von Hohenlohe, who was given the assignment of transforming the "Aryanized Schloss and Estate Leopoldskron" into a "guest house for prominent artists of the Reich" and to serve as a "reception area" to the Berghof, Hitler's private retreat on the Obersalzberg above the nearby village of Berchtesgaden. The Princess had no sooner moved in than she undertook various renovations, including the construction of additional bathrooms, the installation of central heating, and the creation of an ornate, handcrafted rococo bedroom.

As a gesture of compensation to Reinhardt, whom she had known before the Anschluss, Hohenlohe secured from the Nazis the release of sixteen crates of Max Reinhardt's books, porcelain, silver, and furniture and had them shipped to him in California. Reinhardt found little consolation in Hohenlohe's efforts. "Yes, the stuff arrived," he allegedly remarked. "But what are sixteen crates when you have lost Leopoldskron?"

Stephanie's reign at Leopoldskron was shortlived. With the outbreak of the war, Stephanie, who is believed to have been a double agent, fled to England and eventually to America. Schloss Leopoldskron was again seized by the Nazis and became the residence of the local Gauleiter, who used the facility for official gatherings and meetings until the end of the war when American forces advanced on Salzburg. After the war, the Schloss was restored to the Reinhardt family.

In the spring of 1947, the young American students arrived to find the Schloss in a state of near abandonment. Except for the family of the elderly Hausmeister, Johann Russinger, who had served in the household of Emperor Franz Josef before the First World War and who had been tending to Leopoldskron since Reinhardt's time, the Schloss was uninhabited.

In the final months of the war, a bomb had exploded in the garden shattering windows, destroying a crystal chandelier in the library and a beautiful porcelain chandelier on the ground floor, sending shrapnel fragments into the wall murals in the Chinese Room and effacing much of the stucco work on the south facade. Traces of this bomb damage remain to this day.

Demonstrating an impressive degree of resourcefulness, the young Americans- under Russinger's watchful eye- began preparing the abandoned Schloss for the arrival of over ninety students from eighteen European countries. They brought out furniture that had been stored in the cellar rooms, food was obtained from Switzerland and Italy, panes of glass from Czechoslovakia, and scores of mattresses, iron cots and tables from the Red Cross and from the American military.

When the American students had finished their work, Schloss Leopoldskron had been transformed into a rather curious mixture of eighteenth century Rococo, early twentieth century Reinhardt, and postwar army surplus. The elegant Marble Hall, which served as the "cafeteria" for the hundred participants, was packed with an odd assortment of simple wooden stools, Reinhardt's elegant high-backed chairs, and a makeshift banquet table down the center and flanked by several large, round, linoleum-topped military tables that seated up to twelve people. In the library, the latest texts on American history political science, sociology and economics shared the shelves with Reinhardt's books on art, music and literature. The large central space on the third floor-formerly the "portrait gallery," was converted into a large sleeping hall with thirty beds. Other rooms on the second and third floors, some of them elegantly appointed spaces with intricate stucco work and paintings in the ceilings, were used as dormitories accomodating six to ten Fellows each.

For the introductory lecture on July 15, 1947, the participants of the first Salzburg Seminar session gathered outside near the lake to hear "Matty" outline the purpose and background of this educational endeavour.

"Our age has had no escape from an awareness of history," Matthiessen began. "Much of that history has been hard and full of suffering. But now we have the luxury of an historical awareness of another sort. of an occasion not of anxiety but of promise.

"We may speak without exaggeration of this occasion as historic, since we have come here to enact anew the chief function of culture and humanism, to bring man again into communication with man."

Matthiessen went on to detail the goals of the coming days and weeks, to acknowledge the diverse political persuasions among the participants, to assure them that "none of our group has come as imperialists of Pax Americana to impose our values on you," that the seminar would consider not only the strengths of American democracy, but also its "excesses and limitations."

And finally, Matthiessen paid tribute to the genius of Max Reinhardt and the beneficence of his widow. "This is a castle with many associations for Americans, since it was the home of a great producer whose work used to bring many of us to Salzburg. By filling these walls again with discussion of ideas," Matthiessen observed. "we hope to pay tribute to his memory and to the generosity of his widow, the distinguished Helene Thimig, in enabling us to create our community here."

It was not an easy community that came to Schloss Leopoldskron in July of 1947. Heller and the others, in their attempt to bridge geographic, political and cultural differences, had brought together individuals many of whom just two years before had been bitter enemies. Among the scores of Europeans who attended the first session of the Salzburg Seminar, there was hardly one among their number who had not been affected or scarred by six years of war. There was the Dane, whose last encounter with a German had been a brutal

interrogation by the Gestapo; the 27 year-old Czech, who, as a member of the resistance movement, had been arrested and imprisoned in Buchenwald; the Spaniard who had spent the war in Mexican exile, the Italian anti-fascist, who had been captured in Vichy France; the Austrian who had joined the Nazi party, had fought in France, had been captured in Tunisia and passed the rest of the war in an American POW camp in Kentucky, where he had first learned English; and the Jewish woman from Romania who had seen her mother shot before her eyes at Auschwitz and who, while being marched into a gas chamber had been pulled from the line by a Czech guard and hidden for three days among a pile of dead bodies and having survived the war now wanted to emigrate to America to start a new life. It was a generation bludgeoned by a dark and bitter history.

In this first summer of the Salzburg Seminar, participants found common ground in the study of American culture, politics, and economy. Matthiessen guided his students through Nathaniel Hawthorne's, *Scarlet Letter* and Herman Melville's, *Moby Dick*. Leontief lectured on the fundamentals of economics, and Margaret Mead, America's renowned observer of human behavior, introduced her students to the methods of cultural anthropology, instructing them to analyze the eating habits, sleeping habits and social interaction of the Schloss Leopoldskron community. One visitor that summer recalled being met at the door of the Schloss by a "short-haired stocky woman" who asked, "We are taking a survey. Were you breast-fed?"

The participants passed their leisure time wandering the ground, swimming in the lake, or strolling through Salzburg.

In these early years, the Salzburg Seminar was a purely student-run venture, with Heller, Elledge, and Campbell overseeing every detail from securing foodstuffs to planning the academic schedule. Participants remember that Campbell, who was restricted to a wheelchair following an accident many years before, seemed to be everywhere in the Schloss, rolling effortlessly across the marble floors, being carried up and down the staircases by friends and participants alike.

By the end of August, it was clear that this American "summer school" had been a success. In their departing comments, these newly minted alumni not only expressed wonder at the ability of their American instructors to combine personal warmth with intellectual rigor, but were also astonished that in the middle of the American Zone of Occupation, with a U.S. military headquarters next door in the Meierhof, neither the American faculty nor the American students had shown any hesitation in criticizing the United States Government and its policies.

"The sons of Eastern European countries regarded this summer school with a certain degree of suspicion when they received the invitation," a Hungarian participant reported in a Budapest newspaper upon his return. "They suspected that this summer seminar was only a cover to give lessons in American democracy. This suspicion, however, proved to be unfounded, because there was not even a trace of propaganda in Salzburg. The American hosts openly pointed out their own faults and showed no hostility or intolerance toward the ideas and opinions of others. In this magnificent atmosphere devoid of any political or ideological prejudice, the problems of spiritual cooperation between Europe and America were aired."

The participants from Eastern Europe may have been reassured, but some Americans had grown wary. During the course of the six-week session, the U.S. Army's intelligence service had dispatched agents to infiltrate the session and report on the activities in Schloss Leopoldskron. Following one rather heated exchange in which various views were expressed on comparative aspects of the United States and the Soviet Union, a report was submitted questioning the political reliability of the Salzburg Seminar and labeling Clemens Heller as a dangerous "Red." The report found its way to the Department of State in Washington and Clemens Heller was barred from re-entering Austria. Discussion ensued about banning future Salzburg Seminar activities at the Schloss.

During the autumn of 1947 and early into 1948, deliberations were exchanged between the American Legation in Vienna and the Department of State in Washington, as government officials weighed the future of the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies.

By this time, the Salzburg Seminar found an important ally and friend in Martin Herz, a political officer of the American Legation. Herz had visited the Seminar in the summer of 1947 and had been duly impressed by the intellectual quality of the discussion and by the openness of the exchanges. Herz argued that the nature of the discussion at the Salzburg Seminar, rather than being anti-American, had in fact represented perfect examples of American democratic thought and action. "Here, if left to develop in its own way," Herz wrote in an official report to Washington in January 1948, "is a peculiar and unique instrument for the effective projection of American democracy." Due in great part to the efforts of Martin Herz, the Salzburg Seminar was allowed to hold its second session in the summer of 1948.

In the ensuing years, the Salzburg Seminar expanded its program significantly, transforming itself from an ad hoc organization into an incorporated educational entity, with a President, a Board of Directors, a permanent American office, and regular sources of support from major American foundations.

In addition to the "General Sessions," the last of which was held in the summer of 1955, the Seminar began organizing a half-dozen sessions each year on particular aspects of American Studies. In order to staff these sessions, the Seminar recruited faculty from universities and colleges across the United States, bringing to Schloss Leopoldskron many of America's most eminent figures in political, economic and cultural life, including the legal authority Kingman Brewster, the sociologist Daniel Bell, the historian Henry Steel Commager, the American novelists Saul Bellow and Ralph Ellison, and the composer Virgil Thomson. In 1953, the Seminar held its first session in American Law and Legal Institutions, which has become the longest running Salzburg Seminar session, and which, by the early 1980s, had brought virtually every United States Supreme Court Justice to Schloss Leopoldskron.

In these early years, the Salzburg newspapers reported regularly on events at Schloss Leopoldskron, be it the arrival of a new director, visits by distinguished personalities, or notable performances, such as the European premier of E.E. Cumming's play, *him*, which was staged in the Schloss Park theater by the renowned director Erie Bentley.

In the summer of 1950, the Salzburg newspapers lavished attention on a young Seminar participant from France. Marcel Marceau, The 27 year-old actor, who had already established himself on many of Europe's stages for his pantomimes, attended a June session on "Modern Theater in America" at a time when the Seminar found itself in grave financial difficulties. During the session, Marceau nervously offered to raise funds by holding a series of performances at a small theater in the city. They proved to be a sensation and the earnings from eight sold-out shows allowed the Seminar to weather its fiscal crisis.

For the first decade of its existence, the Salzburg Seminar, which had brought hundreds of young American and European intellectuals to Schloss Leopoldskron, had been little more than a "guest" in Max Reinhardt's former residence, leasing the "facility" first from the Reinhardt heirs, then from Bertelsmann Verlag, the German publishing company which purchased the property in 1956. In 1959, the Salzburg Seminar, after extended negotiations, purchased the Schloss for two million schillings (approximately \$95,000 at the time).

The Seminar immediately initiated a series of ambitious renovation projects. The entire building was rewired, the heating system updated and extended, and an elevator installed. The south facade, which still showed bomb damage from the war, was restored and large rooms on the third floor were converted into faculty apartments, each with a bedroom, sitting room and bathroom. In order to brace the sagging floor in the Marble Hall, supporting arches were installed downstairs in the Great Hall.

The renovations and the "face lift" on the south facade were barely completed when the Schloss came to the attention of Hollywood. In the autumn of 1963, a representative of the American film company, Twentieth Century Fox, approached the Seminar about using the Schloss and the grounds for the film adaptation of the Rogers and Hammerstein musical, *The Sound of Music*. At a meeting in December 1963, the Seminar's Board of Directors weighed the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal. On the one hand, the Board had no objection to renting the Schloss for such an undertaking. At the same time, they feared that bad

weather, not an insignificant concern in Salzburg, might delay the filming and cause it to interfere with the summer sessions. Further, film companies were notoriously disrespectful of trees and other "obstacles" that might intrude on their artistic vision. The Board was also concerned that a rental for commercial activity could affect the Seminar's tax-exempt status, a danger not worth the risk for the \$10,000 the producer had offered to pay for use of the site. Contrary to rumors, there was no offer for the Seminar to share in the film's royalties. After extensive deliberation, the Board declined the offer, informing Darryl Zanuck of Twentieth Century Fox "that our property would not be available for filming *Sound of Music*".

Twentieth Century Fox, intent on using at least the Schloss Leopoldskron "setting," the lake with the dramatic backdrop of the Untersberg, rented from Berteismann the space adjacent to the Schloss. With the construction of a gazebo and a facsimile terrace with plaster copies of the lake-side sea-horses, a number of central scenes were filmed on the site, including a tea-time chat between Uncle Max and the Baroness, a love scene between Liesl and Rolf, the romantic evening stroll by Maria and the Captain, and the memorable moment when Maria and her seven charges capsize near the shore in a rowboat.

Schloss Leopoldskron does not make a single appearance in the film, and yet it has become inextricably associated with this legendary motion picture. Guided tours of Salzburg have contributed to promoting this impression by walking groups of tourists around the other side of the lake for a view of the "Sound of Music Palace".

But it was not only the tourists who began to view Schloss Leopoldskron in a different light. Until the mid 1960s, the Schloss had served as a venue for introducing Western Europeans to diverse aspects of American economics, politics, and culture. In the mid 1960s, the Salzburg Seminar moved to expand both the thematic and geographic breadth of its program, introducing issues of international concern and seeking again to bring East Europeans to its sessions.

In the autumn of 1965, the Director of the Salzburg Seminar travelled to Eastern Europe to reestablish links that had been severed by the Cold War. Although the Seminar had brought fair numbers of Fellows from East and Central Europe to its first sessions, the numbers had dwindled as East-West tensions grew. In 1946, there had been seven Fellows from Yugoslavia and another six in 1948. However, in 1949, the number dropped to only four. The following year there were no East Europeans at all, except for representatives from Yugoslavia, who attended sessions regularly after 1952. There were virtually no other East Europeans for nearly two decades.

In 1965, the Salzburg Seminar's initial approaches to ministries in Budapest, Warsaw and Prague were greeted with a mixture of suspicion and interest. Although neither Poles nor the Hungarians attended sessions in 1966, several participants from Czechoslovakia were dispatched to sessions on American economics, literature and politics.

The four Czechoslovakian participants who attended the session on economics, though somewhat reticent in discussions, represented an important addition to the group of Fellows. One "charming young Communist" in particular gave a disarming performance when he presented a candid assessment of the situation in Czechoslovakia. Then, according to one faculty member, "with a twinkle in his eye smilingly remarked, "Now for some propaganda, which he proceeded to provide."

The "experiment" proved a success. Later that year, four more Fellows from Czechoslovakia attended a session on the American political system. The following year, participants from Czechoslovakia were joined by Fellows from Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria. The first Romanian came in 1968, the first East German in 1973, and the first Fellow from the Soviet Union in 1978. Despite the recurrent tensions in East-West relations over the next two decades, East Europeans maintained a significant presence at virtually every session of the Salzburg Seminar. By the time of the revolutions of 1989, the Salzburg Seminar had nearly sixteen hundred alumni in East and Central Europe.

For much of the Cold War, the Salzburg Seminar represented one of the few forums in the world where large numbers of men and women from both sides of the Iron Curtain could gather to discuss issues of common concern. The ability of the Salzburg Seminar to bring together people of differing ideological, political and religious persuasions was due in no small part to the Seminar's location in Austria, a neutral country with a hospitable people located in the very heart of Europe.

Concurrent with its attempts to provide a bridge between East and West Europe, the Salzburg Seminar also made efforts to expand both the thematic and geographic reach of its program. As the Seminar began addressing issues of global concern, increasing numbers of participants began to come first from the Middle East, then from Africa, Latin America and the Far East. The Salzburg Seminar was transformed into a truly global forum.

As the Salzburg Seminar has broadened the international representation at its sessions, it has also expanded its academic mandate. Interestingly the Seminar has addressed such issues as international trade relations, global security arrangements, international political cooperation, environmental concerns, and transnational law and legal institutions. In the area of social issues, the Seminar has paid particular attention to issues of health care, population control, and urban development. For its programs, the Seminar brings to Schloss Leopoldskron leading international figures in virtually every realm of human endeavour, be they leaders in government, industry, banking, academia, or culture. Despite the diversity in themes and participants, the Salzburg Seminar has remained a distinctively American institution in the very heart of Europe.

Over the decades, the Salzburg Seminar has flourished under the leadership of a series of distinguished presidents who have included former diplomats, businessmen, and university administrators, each of whom has left a distinctive imprint on the Seminar and its program. This distinguished cadre of individuals has guided the Seminar through the second half of the twentieth century, guaranteeing stability and continuity in difficult times, providing vision and leadership in times of growth.

Despite the personal imprint left behind by each successive President, the fundamental mission and "spirit" of the Salzburg Seminar has changed little since the days when a young Harvard student, Richard Campbell, in penning the Seminar's unofficial charter, stated that it was the founders' hope that individuals from different countries could meet for a period of time "in concrete work under favorable living conditions". Although the world in which the Salzburg Seminar was first conceived has changed dramatically in the past five decades, the fundamental spirit and mission of this institution endures.

Much of the continuity of the Salzburg Seminar, indeed, much of its "magic", derives from the spacious atmosphere and playful grandeur of Schloss Leopoldskron itself. Over the years, both the institution and the structure have evolved together, an organic fission of function and form, of American informality and candor in a setting of European elegance.

Without Schloss Leopoldskron, the Salzburg Seminar might well have achieved its reputation as a leading center for intellectual and cultural exchange but it certainly would not have left so vivid and enduring an imprint on the memories of those who have passed even a short time of their lives in *diesen heil'gen Hallen*, within these sacred halls.

Shortly after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, a former Fellow from Eastern Europe visited Schloss Leopoldskron. He said that he had attended one of the first sessions of the Salzburg Seminar and that after he had returned to his country his passport had been withdrawn. He had not been allowed to visit the West since that time. Following the political changes in his country, he determined that his first journey west would be back to the place where he had spent six of the most memorable weeks of his life. "How is it, when I have not been here for over forty years, almost a half century," he mused while standing in the Great Hall. "it feels as though I had never left." There is something indelible about the impression left by Schloss Leopoldskron that transcends both time and borders. It is indeed a stage on which every encounter assumes a touch of the dramatic.

This magical charm may well be as old as the Schloss itself. In a biography of his father, Gottfried Reinhardt once recalled Schloss Leopoldskron of the 1920s and 1930s as a "scene bustling with traffic, and it was safe to say, the only place of its kind in Central Europe. Many an exciting project was conceived there, many a career launched. Many intrigues set brewing and many a love affair born and shattered." Gottfried's observation remains equally valid in the age of the Salzburg Seminar.