

The Early Days

of the

Anglo-Austrian
Society

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by

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Originally published by the Anglo-Austrian Society to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Society's foundation. 1944-1969. Republished 2006.

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THE MOSCOW DECLARATION

Declaration on Austrian independence made by the Foreign Ministers of Great Britain, The United States of America and the Soviet Union - November 1st, 1943.

The Governments of the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and the United States of America are agreed that Austria, the first free country to fall a victim to Hitlerite aggression, shall be liberated from German domination

They regard the annexation imposed upon Austria by Germany on March 15th, 1938, as null and void. They consider themselves as in no way bound by any changes effected in Austria since that date. They declare that they wish to see re-established a free independent Austria, and thereby to open the way for the Austrian people themselves, as well as those neighbouring states which will be faced with similar problems, to find that political and economic security which is the only basis for lasting peace.

Austria is reminded, however, that she has a responsibility which she cannot evade for participation in the war on the side of Hitlerite Germany, and that in the final settlement account will inevitably be taken on her own contribution to her liberation.

V. MOLOTOV

A. EDEN

CORDELL HULL

1. Austrian Democracy

The Anglo-Austrian Society started as a political society and later expanded into an organisation active in many fields, promoting and maintaining friendly relations between the peoples of Britain and Austria.

From its foundation on July 12, 1944 until April 9, 1946 it was named the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society. Its purpose was to interest the British public in the fate of Austria at the end of the war, to assist in the restoration of Austrian independence and democracy and to help in preventing Austria from falling into the Russian sphere of influence in Europe. That these aims could be achieved was at that time by no means certain.

The starting-point for these political activities was the Moscow Declaration issued by the three major allied powers (Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union) on November 1, 1943. In this statement the allied powers for the first time clearly announced their intention that Austria should be restored as an independent country.

This opened the way for the formation in London on November 9, 1943 of the Austrian Representative Committee. Until then the position of Austrian organisations in Britain had been peculiar. There was no Austrian government –in-exile. Memories of the civil war of February 1934 made co-operation between Austrian Socialists and Conservatives difficult. The field was left free for the Communists who quickly seized their opportunity. Early in the war, while the Austrian Socialists in Britain were still inclined to leave the ultimate decision about the fate of Austria to the Austrian people themselves, the Austrian Communists had first built up the “Austrian Centre” and then, in co-operation with some right-wing groups, the Free Austrian Movement which, while never revealing its true political inspiration, gathered round it a large number of Austrian cultural organisations had no clear conception of the character of the political leadership.

The decision of the allies helped the non-Communist Austrians to make up their minds. The Austrian Representative Committee consisted of representatives of the Austrian Trade Unionists, the Socialists, the Catholics (Christian Democrats) and the Democrats. The declared aim was to create an independent, truly democratic Austrian Republic from which all roots of Fascism should be eradicated. The Communists were invited to join, but never did. The Austrian Representative Committee tried to gain recognition as the representation of Austrians abroad. The Communist-inspired Free Austrian Movement had earlier made the same claim and had not succeeded. The Austrian Representative Committee did not succeed either in gaining general recognition, though it was consulted by the British Authorities on various occasions and on various matters.

At this point it was considered desirable to create a wider organisation which should help the Austrian Representative Committee to spread the message of democratic Austria

and at the same time to counteract the propaganda of the Communists. Owing to the coming together of different political groups in the Representative Committee it was possible to build such an organisation on a non-party basis. It could also include British supporters of the aim of restoring democracy in Austria while the existing Austrian organisations consisted exclusively of Austrians in exile. The formation of an organisation of this kind was all the more necessary as the Free Austrian Movement was building up a similar organisation to promote its own political aims, called the Friends of Austria

Among the organisations forming the Austrian Representative Committee that of the Socialists, the London Bureau of the Austrian Socialists, with which the Austrian Labour Club was affiliated, was by far the largest. It entrusted Frederick Scheu, an Austrian journalist working in London with the task of preparing the formation of such a contact organisation, to be named the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society.

It was not entirely easy to get together the British members of the executive committee. Some people in public life had been misled by propaganda or mistrusted the prominent part which the Austrian Socialists played in the venture. That this was so largely due to the fact that owing to political developments in Austria between 1934 and 1938 the number of Austrian Christian Democrats in Britain was comparatively small. Others feared becoming involved in the intricacies of Central European politics.

Two men who from the beginning were active in getting the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society started were George Russell Strauss, Labour M.P. for North Lambeth, who had been on close terms with Scheu since Vienna days, and John Hynd, Labour M.P. for Sheffield, whose knowledge of German and interest in foreign policy had made him a friend and protector of the Austrian Labour Club.

There were some refusals. Sir Ernest Barker, the Cambridge political scientist, refused on the grounds that the Austrian Socialists were "pan-Germanists" He had been misinformed by his Communist friends. Sir Walter (later Lord) Layton, Chairman of the "News Chronicle," considered joining but finally came to the conclusion that he did not want to take sides in a question of Austrian politics.

But Tom Horabin, Liberal M.P. for North Cornwall, who had been approached by Strauss, agreed to become Chairman of the Society and loyalty and steadfastly helped to get the Society through its first difficult period. Among others who came in were John Edwards, a trade unionist active in international affairs, and Miss Barbara Betts (Mrs Barbara Castle) who, though she did not actively take part for long, helped the Society by lending her name from the beginning. With the aim of including British "Christian Democrats," Scheu approached Miss Babara Ward of the "Economist" who did not want to join the executive herself, but asked a friend of hers, Miss Barbara Barclay-Carter, who worked with her in the "People and Freedom" Group, to become a member of the executive committee.

The inaugural meeting of the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society took place at the headquarters of the Austrian Representative Committee at 65 Knightsbridge, London S.W.1 on July 12, 1944. Frederick Scheu opened the proceedings and asked George Russell Strauss M.P. to take the chair at the meeting. (Tom Horabin M.P. did not accept the chairmanship until some weeks later). The aims of the Society were explained, a resolution to form it was carried unanimously and an executive committee was duly elected.

With the chairmanship provisionally left open, George Russell Strauss was elected Honorary Secretary, with two Austrians, Frederick Scheu and Emil Muller-Sturmheim, Secretary of the Austrian Democratic Union, as Honorary Assistant Secretaries. John Hynd M.P. and Wilhelm Rosenzweig, an Austrian Socialist lawyer, were appointed Honorary Treasurers. The provisional executive committee also included Miss Barbara Betts, Miss B. Baclay-Carter, John Edwards, Tom Horabin M.P., Professor F. Hertz (Vice-Chairman, Austrian Democratic Union), Julius Meinl (Chairman, Austrian Democratic Union) and Mrs Marianne Pollak (Austrian Socialist). All work for the society was done on a voluntary basis, Scheu doing most of the organisational work and Mrs Charlotte Winter helping with the secretarial side.

An appeal was issued by the Society to members of the British public in which was said; "The destruction of Austrian democracy and four years later Hitler's into Austria were decisive events in the sequence which led to the subjection of Europe under the yoke of tyranny. At the time Austria had the sympathies of the democratic world, yet its key position, its vital importance for peace, progress and liberty in Europe was insufficiently understood in the democratic countries."

"The recent Moscow Declaration promising the restoration of a free and independent Austria proved that the United Nations have at last recognised the importance of a country to whom Europe owes so much historically, politically and culturally. We are convinced that something more is needed to make sure that the democratic bastion at Vienna is fully restored and shall not fall again. Democratic Austria needs the full moral and material support of the democratic world.

"We therefore propose to form the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society to give democratic Austria all possible help from British Democrats. The purpose of the Society will be; (1) to spread understanding of the importance of Austrian democracy for the peace and progress of Europe; (2) to raise funds for the Austrian democratic cause; (3) to promote closer contact between British and Austrian democrats, and to promote in the liberated Austrian Republic knowledge and understanding of British democratic ideas and institutions."

The latter task became the aim of the Anglo-Austrian's sister society, the British-Österreichische Gesellschaft when it was formed in Vienna after the liberation of Austria. As to the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society it had originally been planned to form branches in British cities where Austrians lived and had friends. None of these local branches maintained itself at the time. The chosen name of "Anglo-Austrian" instead of

“British-Austrian” was partly connected with a scheme to found a separate “Austro-Caledonian Society” for Scotland. This scheme did not mature. But I have still not given up hope that such a society will one day come into existence as an affiliate of the Anglo-Austrian Society.

2. FIRST STEPS

The war was drawing to its close. The Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society made its first public appearance at a meeting at Caxton Hall, London, on November 15, 1944. The occasion was the anniversary of the foundation of the Austrian Republic in November 1918. The main speaker was Sir Stafford Cripps, then Minister of Aircraft Production. That a leading member of the British war cabinet was willing to speak at a public meeting sponsored by the democratic Austrian groups in Britain was itself a fact of political significance.

Tom Horabin M.P. was in the chair. Other speakers were Oscar Pollak (of the Austrian Socialists), Professor Harold Laski, Franz Schneider (of the Austrian Catholics), George Russell Strauss M.P., Richard Flatter (an Austrian writer well known for his translations of Shakespeare’s works into German, speaking for the Austrian Union of Democrats) and John Edwards.

In his speech Sir Stafford Cripps reminded his audience of the part played by democratic Austria before the war and how it had disappeared because the aggressive Fascist powers had been allowed to interfere in Austrian affairs and so bring about the destruction of Austria from within. He stressed the interest of Britain in the future of Austria, not omitting Britain’s intention to work closely with the Soviet Union in accordance with the Anglo-Soviet pact to ensure the future safety of Europe. “We must never again neglect democracy wherever it may be found,” he said. “We must support and cherish it, make it strong to resist aggression and infiltration.”

This speech by Sir Stafford Cripps was widely reported in the British press and in the Austrian exiled press throughout the world. It helped to set the key-note for Britain’s attitude to Austrian affairs in the next two years.

During the winter, while the Soviet armies were approaching the Austrian frontier, the Society held a number of meetings designed to keep British interest in the fate of Austria alive. A meeting at Caxton Hall, London, in March 1945, at which Jim Griffiths M.P. and Miss Jennie Lee were the speakers, marked the seventh anniversary of the Nazi occupation of Austria. But it was not so much a meeting of commemoration as a rally looking towards the democratic future of Austria. At another meeting Clement Davies

M.P., leader of the Liberal Party, addressed members of the society on “Aspects of Democracy.”

Meanwhile the first intrepid secret couriers reached Vienna which was still under Nazi government and established contact with democratic forces there. They brought back the assurance of the continued existence of the democratic political groups which were beginning to reorganise. One important point which their reports made clear was that joint suffering in the Nazi concentration camps had brought the former civil war enemies---the Austrian Conservative Catholics and the Socialists ---together and made co-operation between them, and to some extent with the Austrian Communists, politically possible.

In the first week of April Vienna was, after hard fighting liberated by Soviet troops. About the same time Allied troops entered Austria from the West. The division of Austria into four occupation zones with Vienna under joint four-power occupation, which had previously been decided upon by the Allies, gradually took effect. But for several months Vienna and the Eastern part of Austria was solely occupied by the Soviet armies. To establish contact with Vienna from the West was for a time almost as difficult as it had been under Nazi rule.

First news from Vienna was brought to London by Paul Lister an Austrian who was acting as interpreter in the advance party of the British army sent to prepare quarters for the troops in the future British occupation sector in Vienna. Soon afterwards three Austrians, former members of the British forces, crossed the Russian Zone of Austria disguised as peasants and brought back details of the dire conditions prevailing in the Austrian capital.

An important development took place in Vienna at the end of April. The Russians authorised Dr Karl Renner, the veteran Socialist leader, to form an Austrian government composed of three parties: the (conservative) Austrian People’s Party, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party. The new Austrian government was at first recognised only by the Russians and not by the Western powers. There were fears in the West that the Renner government was nothing but a Russian puppet regime.

Austrian democratic political circles in London had sufficient knowledge of the personalities composing the new Austrian government to be free from such anxieties and one of their principal tasks was to help in preparing the way for a general recognition of the Renner cabinet. With this in view the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society as early as May 10 addressed a message of congratulations to the new government which it sent to the Soviet Ambassador in London, Fyodor Gusev, with a request to pass it on to Vienna.

The message was addressed to “His Excellency Dr Karl Renner, Prime Minister, provisional Austrian Government Vienna” and read: “Your Excellency, the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society in London has asked us through its Executive to convey to you our hearty congratulations on your assumption of office. We welcome the

establishment of a democratic representative Government in Austria and wish you every success. Yours faithfully, T. L. Horabin, Chairman, G.R.Strauss, Hon. Secretary.”

The struggle over the recognition of the new Austrian government by the Western allies went on for some time and it was not until October 20 that the three Western powers officially recognised the Renner government and extended its writ into their own occupation zones. The result of the first parliamentary elections held in November showed that this decision was politically sound: The Communists, who had expected to win at least a third of the seats, dwindled to a small group of four members among one hundred and sixty-five.

Meanwhile political changes in Britain had their effects on the composition of the Society's Executive. Owing to the election victory of the British Labour Party two men who had actively helped in the formation of the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society became members of the British government and were no longer able to exercise their functions in a society of this kind. George Russell Strauss M.P., Honorary Secretary of the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society, was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of War Transport, John Hynd M.P., Honorary Treasurer, was appointed Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and in this capacity was the Minister in charge of the affairs of the British Zones of Occupation both in Germany and in Austria.

At the invitation of the Executive John Edwards M.P., agreed to become Honorary Secretary of the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society. Wilhelm Rosenzweig continued alone as Honorary Treasurer until he returned to Vienna at the end of the year when his work as Honorary Treasurer was taken over by Karl Ausch, Austrian writer on economic affairs and member of the London Bureau of the Austrian Socialists.

Two members of the executive committee, John Edwards and Miss Barbara Betts (Mrs Barbara Castle) became Members of Parliament at the elections. Other changes took place on what might be called the Austrian side of the executive committee. In July following the formation of the (conservative) Austrian People's Party in Austria, the Christian Democratic group of Austrians in Britain formed itself into the Austrian Christian People's Party in Great Britain. Its chairman Franz Schneider, an Austrian lawyer living in Britain, who had already given much help with the Society, was co-opted as a member of the executive committee.

In November Mrs Marianne Pollak returned to Austria in time to take part in the election campaign. She was elected a Socialist member of the Austrian parliament. Her husband had preceded her some months earlier to resume his pre-war position as Editor-in-Chief of the Austrian Socialist daily newspaper "Arbeiter-Zeitung." At the same time as Mrs Pollak, Wilhelm Rosenzweig went back to Austria to take up his work as a barrister.

Tom Horabin M.P., chairman of the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society, and William Warbey, a labour M.P., who had given the Society help on various occasions,

were members of a British parliamentary delegation which visited Vienna in November 1945 at a time when contact with Vienna was still rather precarious. They were able during their stay in Vienna to contact Austrian friends who started to build up the Austrian counterpart of the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society, the British-Österreichische Gesellschaft.

By this time it had become clear that the emphasis in the tasks of the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society was shifting. The Society had helped to build up British awareness of the importance of the Austrian Democratic forces and to establish contact with them in Vienna, thus counteracting an exclusive Russian dominance. This had been its prime political task. From now on the situation in Austria made economic help from the West and cultural contacts between Britain and Austria the principal immediate tasks of the Society, to which it devoted itself with vigour.

3. OTTO HARPNER

Otto Harpner though he was not directly associated with the foundation of the Anglo-Austrian Society was the driving force that made it what it later became.

At the end of April 1945, Harpner, then living at Cambridge, got in touch with Frederick Scheu and suggested to him that the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society should organise a large concert in aid of Austria at the Royal Albert Hall in London. In a letter written about this time, he said; “ The best justification for a people’s claim to independence is its cultural contribution towards the world at large.”

Harpner and Scheu had known each other from childhood though they had not been close friends. Harpner’s father had been a well-known Vienna barrister and the official lawyer of the Austrian Social Democratic Party after the first World War. But Otto Harpner himself had, during his stay in England, not taken any part in the activities of the Austrian Labour Club but belonged to a group of Austrian lawyers associated with the Austrian Democratic Union. This group of lawyers had come to the fore after the foundation of the Austrian Representative Committee when it became of interest to formulate constitutional and other legal schemes for the rebuilding of Austria.

Harpner was a lawyer by temperament though he had less interest in juridical abstractions than some of his colleagues. His talent for persuasive speaking helped him in his organisational work during his years as secretary of the Society. But his sense of humour never left him and after a most convincing argument he would close with the words: “and what’s more—it happens to be the truth” (“Und wahr ist es ausserdem!”).

When Harpner, through organising an Albert Hall concert, first got in touch with the Society, he discovered that he liked organising. This was at first a surprise to him. Later he threw himself into the work for the Society with such devotion and passion that he never seemed seriously to regret having given up his profession as a barrister. Unlike many of his colleagues he did not return to Vienna and stayed in England. He did not, however, apply for British citizenship but, as Secretary of the Anglo-Austrian Society, remained an Austrian citizen.

Otto Harpner's suggestions regarding the concert were brought up at a meeting of the Executive committee of the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society on May 2, 1945 by Muller-Sturmheim to whom he had also explained his plans. It was decided to ask Otto Harpner and David Bach, the veteran Vienna music critic, to take over the preparation for the concert. It was Otto Harpner who took over the practical side of this operation. It was also decided at this meeting that the proceeds of the Albert Hall concert should go towards the establishment of an Anglo-Austrian House in London. A new member of the executive committee at this meeting was C. Bonacina, a teacher, who had replaced Miss Barbara Barclay-Carter after her resignation due to ill health. Bonacina, a member of the "People and Freedom" Group, loyally served as a member of the executive committee until he retired in 1967.

Otto Harpner took up his task with energy. He contacted Sir Adrian Boult, the famous conductor, who agreed to conduct his concert, saying that he owed so much to Austrian music that he would consider it an honour to give his services free on such an occasion. He also suggested devoting the proceeds of the concert to a special fund for the resumption and promotion of cultural relations between Britain and Austria. At first a date early in July was considered but as it appeared impossible to get through the preparations in so short a time and as it would have been impractical to let the concert collide with the "prom" concert season starting on July 21, it was decided to arrange for a date in the autumn. Sir Adrian Boult also gave Harpner the advice to work with the concert manager Harold Holt. This started a connection which proved useful for the work of the Anglo-Austrian Society in the musical field in later years.

In a discussion with David Bach the question was considered whether modern Austrian music should be performed. Bach, one of the champions of modern music in Austria, at first favoured this course, but later agreed with Harpner that at a large representative function of this kind it would be wiser and safer to play works of the classical "Big Four": Mozart, Haydn, Schubert and Beethoven.

At this stage there were still political difficulties to overcome as the provisional Austrian government of Dr Karl Renner had not yet been recognised by the eastern allies. The last Austrian envoy to Britain, Sir George Franckenstein, whom Harpner approached, at first declined to help and gave as his only reason that the proposed concert was under the auspices of "only one part of the emigration." Harpner felt that the diplomat's hesitation was due not so much to sympathies for the "Free Austrian Movement" than to doubt about supporting an organisation in contact with a government which had not yet received full British recognition. Later, after recognition of the new government had been

achieved, Sir George agreed to become a patron of the concert. Other patrons were Lady Cripps, Sir Walford Selby (who had been British Minister to Vienna during the crucial years from 1933 to 1937), the Chairman of the London County Council and the Mayor of Vienna.

At the end of July 1945 Otto Harpner was asked to attend a meeting of the executive committee to give a report on the preparations for the concert. He was able to report that Sir Adrian Boult had agreed to conduct the London Symphony Orchestra for the occasion and that he was giving his services free; that the same applied to the concert manager, Harold Holt, as well as to the soloists chosen for the concert, the Vienna-born pianist Alfred Blumen and the singer Miss Joan Hammond.

At the time it was planned to devote half of the net proceeds of the concert not to cultural causes, but to a more direct charitable aim. This would be the most urgent aim of the moment: Aid for the Austrian victims of Nazi concentration camps. The other half would remain with an Aid to Austria Fund which was to be started. The administration of this fund was to be kept from the other funds of the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society to mark the intention of the Society to use the Fund for cultural purposes only and not for its political work.

A number of problems arose from the question of the use of these funds and on October 21, immediately after the recognition of the Renner government by the Western Powers, Otto Harpner wrote to Fredrick Scheu drawing his attention to the fact that the Communist-inspired Free Austrian Movement was running a collection for Austria in Britain and was able to do so with more freedom because it had a fund at its disposal set up previously under the War Charities Act. This fund could now be used for another aim, similar to that which the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society had in mind, that is to make general or special collections in favour of Austrian charitable aims.

Harpner also reported that the British Foreign Office, which had at first indicated that it considered collections for Austria as “premature”, had changed its attitude after the recognition of the Renner government. But it still had doubts as to who should finally receive the funds collected. There were also doubts connected with the general shortage of goods in Britain and with monetary exchange considerations. Summing up, Harpner wrote that the importance of collections of this kind which could not bring in very substantial amounts was not material but moral: they were meant to prove the affirmative reaction of the British public to the aims indicated and to make this known to the Austrian people.

The outcome of these considerations was a decision of the executive committee to devote the entire profits of the concert to charitable purposes (aid to starving Austrian children and to concentration camp victims) and to form for this purpose a relief fund for Austria, named the “Aid to Austria Fund”, which was registered as a charity. The fund’s chairman was the Chairman of the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society, Tom Horabin M.P., its secretary was John Thwaites, a Foreign Office official who had dealt with

Austrian matters during the war and was known for his sympathetic attitude towards Austria.

The Royal Albert Hall concert took place on December 7 and was a great success. Net profits were more than £1,000. Many prominent members of the public were present, including leading personalities of the diplomatic corps, among them (which was significant in view of the political situation) the Soviet Ambassador, Gusev, and his wife.

At the annual general meeting of the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society held on December 20, 1945 the Hon. Secretary, John Edwards M.P., was able to report on the satisfactory progress of the Society whose immediate tasks were now largely being turned towards economic aid for Austria. The executive committee was re-elected, with William Warbey M.P., Otto Harpner, Mrs. Emmy Freundlich (a former Austrian Socialist M.P. now living in England) and Walter Wodak (later a member of the Austrian Embassy in Britain) joined the executive committee.

4. AID TO AUSTRIA

By the beginning of 1946 it was clear that economic aid for the starving and indigent population of Austria was now the most urgent necessity. The situation during the first months after the end of the war had been even worst. But there was no chance of giving much effective help from Britain until the Austrian provisional government had been recognised by the Western Allies. This had now happened and question of collecting money, food and supplies, and of transferring them to Austria became of paramount importance.

It was soon clear that the existence of two competing relief funds, the Aid to Austria Fund started by the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society and the Austrian Relief Fund sponsored by the Free Austrian Movement could only do harm and make work for Austria in Britain more difficult. It was therefore decided to merge the two funds as from January 1, 1946. The new joint organisation was to be called the Aid for Austria Appeal Committee.

The work of getting this organisation started was undertaken with great energy by Mrs Jennie Lee M.P. who had old personal and political connections with Austria. She brought to this task the force of her dynamic personality. In her report to the annual general meeting of the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society on December 20, 1945 she described the difficulties which had to be overcome. The British government as well as prominent personalities in British public life had insisted that there should be only one appeal for Austria, to be run in Britain, not two and that the result of collections should

not be reserved for any particular group of Austrians. While all organisations represented in the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society had agreed to these conditions from the outset, the Communist-sponsored groups had made difficulties. They wanted to restrict aid to those Austrians whom they recognised as “anti-fascists.”

These problems had at last been satisfactorily settled. Chairman of the new committee was to be Sir Walford Selby who had taken an active part in the efforts to get the fund started. It was decided to run the fund with the active support of the Society of Friends (Quakers) who had valuable experience in the field of relief work in Austria from their still unforgotten activities there after the first World War and again after the civil war of 1934. Miss Edith Pye, who was connected with the Society of Friends and who had agreed to act as Honorary Secretary to the Appeal Committee, J.B.Priestly agreed to be Hon. Treasurer.

The appeal was to be launched sponsored by prominent personalities including the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of Westminster, the Chief Rabbi, Lady Cripps, Lord Perth, General Mason Macfarlane, Lord Sempill and David Grenfell M.P. The vice-presidents of the fund were to be Dr Hilda Clark (representing the Society of Friends), Miss Jennie Lee (representing the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society) and Mrs Corbett-Ashby (representing the groups connected with the Free Austrian Movement). The composition of the committee, said Jennie Lee in her report was to give proof that it was not intended to make relief for Austria a matter of any party, but that the scheme was supported irrespective of political or religious creed.

In a circular letter to former Famine Relief Groups sent out by Miss Edith Pye, she said; “Accounts of conditions in Austria just before and after the liberation confirm the worst fears. The situation of the ordinary people and especially the children is worse than after the last war. During the first eight months of the past year nearly one out of every four babies born died and, though there is improvement now in some parts, those who saw Vienna in 1919 and 1920 know that ill-health and under nourishment is the lot of those children who survive.”

Miss Pye’s letter then quotes “an authentic source in Lower Austria” which says: “Our children look like ghosts. Their arms and legs are reduced to their bones. The mothers have to carry them to the doctors because they are too weak to walk. There is no milk even for the youngest babies.”

The official ration in this part of Austria for normal consumers---the ordinary people---at this time was 800 calories per day, but the report continued: “In many cases it is not even possible to grant the entirely insufficient rations for normal consumers---for instance between October 21 and October 28, 1945, in one of the chief industrial towns of Lower Austria only one kilo of bread, ¼ kilo of peas and five grams of fat per person were distributed.” Miss Pye’s letter then draws attention to the new relief fund and says: “If help is sent quickly, it may save many.”

Alfred Geiringer, an Austrian-born journalist working in Britain, in a report of a meeting he had in Vienna with Joseph Afritsch, alderman in charge of general administration, and other Austrians stated that the needs in order of priority were: (1) Food: Dried milk, fats of all kinds, vitamins, cocoa, sardines, etc, (2) Medical supplies (of which a list was attached), (3) Shoes or leather and shoe repairing materials.

Money for Austria began to arrive in large and small donations after Mrs Barbara Ayrton-Gould M.P. had made a moving appeal over the BBC in a Sunday evening broadcast at 8.25pm, on March 17. The public responded in a heartening fashion. "The BBC appeal has brought such a flood of gifts that we can deal with them only very gradually with the forces at our disposal. In addition, relief organisations have now offered three donations of altogether £4,000. Together with the c£3,000 which we already had, the £10,000 which we received permission to spend in Switzerland will be far exceeded" (Harpner in a letter to Scheu, dated March 22).

During this whole period Otto Harpner had devoted his time and energy to the affairs of the Society. While it had been possible in the earliest period of its work for those concerned with the Society to carry on its activities in their spare time, it became clear now that a full-time organisation was needed. At an executive meeting of the Society held at the House of Commons on April 9, 1946, Muller-Sturmheim and Scheu, the deputy secretaries, suggested the appointment of a full-time Organising Secretary and also the engagement of a typist-secretary. Scheu proposed the appointment of Otto Harpner as Organising Secretary.

John Edwards, the Honorary Secretary, then suggested that Harpner should be given the title of Secretary of the Society. He thought this would be the most proper way of backing Harpner's authority. He himself agreed to become one of the deputy-secretaries, together with the other two. This was unanimously accepted.

The work of typist-secretary was taken over by Miss Herta Freundlich, the daughter of the former Austrian M.P., Mrs Emmy Freundlich, who was herself a member of the executive committee and the work of the Society was for a time carried on from Miss Freundlich's home at St Mary's Mansions, London W.2.

There were changes also in the executive committee. Franz Schneider who returned to Austria to take up his former law practice was replaced by J.O. Laemmel, Chairman of the Austrian People's Party in Great Britain. Walter Wodak, who after going out to Austria with the British forces had joined the Austrian diplomatic service came back to Britain with the Austrian Minister, Heinrich Schmid, and became a member of the Austrian legation. He was elected to the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society's executive committee soon after his arrival in London.

While the direction of the Society's affairs was in the hands of its executive committee, there was also a board, consisting of men and women prominent in British public life who had agreed to give their moral support. In 1946, this board consisted of the following persons: Sir Richard Acland, Lady Allen of Hurtwood, Lord Ammon, Dr

David Bach (the Austrian music critic), Vernon Bartlett M.P., the Bishop of Chichester, Mrs Phyllis Bottome, Miss Bertha L. Bracey O.B.E., H. N. Brailsford, Martin Bunzl (the Austrian industrialist), Percy Collick M.P.A., Creech Jones M.P., A Emil Davies L.C.C., Professor Otto Erich Deutsch (authority on music), A.E. Douglas-Smith, Sir Robert Evans, Lord Faringdon, Michael Foot M.P., N.B. Foot, W. Arnold Forster, G.P. Gooch (the historian, an authority on Austria's past), David Grenfell M.P., James Griffiths M.P., B.H. Liddell-Hart (the expert on military affairs), Mrs. Maria Hautmann (former Austrian Socialist woman M.P.), Hans Hoffman, John Hynd M.P., Dr C.E.M. Joad, C.W. Judd, Professor Harold Laski, Lord and Lady Marley (who had both been active in help for refugees), John Parker M.P., Sir Charles Reilly (the architect and town planner), Rev. Reginald Sorensen M.P., Lord Strabolgi, George Russell Strauss M.P., Professor A.J.P. Taylor, Sir Charles Trevelyan, J Emlyn Williams and Lord Winster.

Several members of the board were Labour Members of Parliament who had visited Austria and been in contact with Austrian Socialists during the period of the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg dictatorship between 1934 and 1938. Others had come into contact with Austrian groups in Britain during the war while a few were themselves Austrians living in Britain. The board held no meetings. Its purpose was rather that of a body of sponsors, giving the Society enhanced standing by their participation.

The work for Aid to Austria was now making good progress. In a report to the Anglo-Austrian Society, Harpner stated that the Aid to Austria Appeal Committee had succeeded, up to August 1946 in collecting more than £20,000. The British government had given permission to transfer this money to Switzerland and it had been possible, mainly in Switzerland through the good offices of the International Red Cross in Geneva, to purchase the following quantities of essential food:

Condensed, mainly sweetened milk:	175,000 tins of 2 pints
Sugar	150,000 lbs.
Butter or Margarine	30,000 lbs.

Most of this had actually been delivered to Austria for distribution amongst those in need, in particular children, hospitals, tuberculosis patients, etc.

Harpner added that there had been difficulties with other groups about keeping strictly to the agreement to refrain from separate collecting activities outside the joint appeal. He also drew attention to the possibility that it might not be feasible to continue the appeal in its existing form beyond the autumn and suggested two important lines of relief which had not yet been followed up by the Aid to Austria Appeal Committee which had concentrated on bringing food to Austria. These two lines were to organise a scheme of sending individual food parcels from persons in Britain to persons in Austria and to organise a scheme for bringing children from Austria to Britain.

The question of winding up the appeal came up at a meeting of the Aid to Austria Appeal Committee on July 1, when a resolution was submitted by the chairman, Sir

Walford Selby, suggesting that notwithstanding the success achieved it would, having regard to the closing down of other appeals, be a mistake to keep the Austrian appeal in being. The resolution added that the newly recognised Austrian government would in all probability set on foot some form of voluntary organisation to meet the needs as they might develop.

The resolution also took note of the fact that the full amount of the special foreign currency allocation placed at the disposal of the committee by the Chancellor of the Exchequer had been subscribed by the British public and that overhead expenses had been kept within the figure of 3 per cent (with a further 2 per cent to the International Red Cross for purchasing and shipping).

There were two reasons for the moves to wind up the Aid to Austria Appeal: One was the problem of transferring further funds abroad from Britain. The other was trouble between the two groups composing the committee. The Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society accused the Free Austrian Movement of continuing separate collections, which the Movement claimed had been started before the appeal was launched, as well as trying to send to Austria goods “earmarked” for special groups of recipients.

The Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society, however refused to agree to the closing down of the appeal. At two meetings held at the House of Commons on July 11 and July 22, the Executive decided that the activities of the Aid to Austria Appeal Committee should be continued at least to the end of the year.

The appeal had been successful in drawing attention to the plight of Austria. At a public meeting organised by the Society to help the appeal which took place at Beaver Hall, London, in May more than 500 people were present. The speakers were Arthur Blenkinsop, Labour M.P. for Newcastle, and Miss Jennie Lee. In a conversation which Harpner had with the recently appointed Austrian Government Representative to London, Dr Heinrich Schmid, the diplomat expressed his appreciation of the work done and the hope that it would continue. Miss Jennie Lee also called on the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, who promised support in various ways, particularly with regard to facilities to buy more food, this time in Denmark.

In the autumn the scheme for sending “individual” food parcels to Austria met with considerable response. In the first four weeks of the scheme orders for about 800 parcels were received. This was partly due to a moving appeal made by Miss Lee in the “Tribune.” The gift food parcels scheme was worked via South Africa. Beside parcels sent to friends and relatives, a special list of schoolchildren in need compiled by an Austrian governmental body was also used.

At this stage there was close co-operation with the “Save Europe Now” Committee. This organisation launched an appeal on behalf of the Friends’ Relief Service (Quakers) and the Oecumenical Refugee Committee, both of which were operating in Austria as well as in other countries. From this source “Aid to Austria” received several thousand Pounds.

Austria's most famous artist, Oscar Kokoschka, who had been living in England during the war years, drew a poster for this appeal which was exhibited in London Underground stations and in public places throughout Britain. It became the symbol of Britain's readiness to help the children of Europe.

The Aid to Austria Appeal was finally wound up at the end of March 1947. Its work was taken over by the Society. Meanwhile various "adoption" schemes for Austrian children into British families had been discussed by the Executive Committee without reaching definite form. Instead, at a meeting of the Executive Committee on October 9, 1946 Otto Harpner gave details of a scheme for bringing Austrian children to Britain.

5. CHILDREN TO BRITAIN

The idea of inviting Austrian children to Britain (which later developed into the large-scale exchange of children between Britain and Austria) first arose during the work of bringing aid to Austria in 1946. After the first World War when economic conditions in Austria had been very bad, many Austrian children had stayed for a time with foster-parents in Holland, Sweden Norway, Denmark and other countries, including Britain.

Many difficulties had to be overcome before the first transport of Austrian children actually reached British shores. In July 1946 Otto Harpner wrote in a memorandum to the executive committee of the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society: "I think it would be essential to organise a scheme of bringing children from Austria to this country. I am convinced this should be done by the Aid to Austria Appeal Committee, the more so as it appears doubtful whether further funds collected will be transferable to Switzerland. However the present position is that the Aid to Austria Committee does not follow up this line of relief work..... I think the executive committee should discuss the matter and give the secretariat directions."

After some negotiation it was at last agreed that a new joint body should be formed, similar to but separate from the Aid to Austria Appeal Committee. Once again, both the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society and the Friends of Austria were to be represented in this organisation which was to be called the Reception Committee for Austrian Children. At an executive committee meeting on December 9, 1946 the Society appointed its representatives: Mrs. Charlotte Winter, Mrs. Marie Paneth and Mrs Warbey (wife of William Warby M.P.), Mrs Warby was to act as joint secretary on behalf of the Society.

In the annual report to the Anglo-Austria Society at the end of 1946, Otto Harpner stated: "It is hoped, in co-operation with the Reception Committee for Young People

from Occupied Countries and other welfare organisations to raise funds and thus to make it possible for a number of Austrian children to recuperate in this country. It is expected that the first group of 200 children will arrive here in the spring.”

As a result of an appeal made by Dame Sybil Thorndike on May 18 over the radio in the “Week’s Good Cause,” and a mail appeal sent out partly to addresses provided by the society, an amount of £2,500 was handed over to the Committee. The Secretary reported in a further Memorandum: “Preparations are advanced enough to allow reasonable hope that a first party of 100 children plus ten youth leaders will arrive in this country in the first week of August.” The £2,500 available to the committee would be sufficient to cover the expenses of the journey and even leave some initial capital for the visit of the next party. Donations were continuing to come in.

“The Austrian children making use of the invitation are selected by an Austrian committee appointed by and acting under the auspices of the Austrian Ministry of Social Welfare. This committee will take charge of transport arrangements as far as the continental Channel port. From there transport etc., will be the responsibility of the committee formed with our collaboration.”

The children were first to stay for about three weeks at a school at Fairford, Gloucestershire. (One purpose of this was to provide a quarantine to guard against infectious diseases.) After this initial period the children would stay for about two months in homes of foster-parents.

At an executive committee meeting of the society on July 17, 1947, Otto Harpner reported that the main burden of responsibility for the children would fall on the Society’s shoulders “in view of the Friends of Austria no longer having an actual organisation and in view of the fact that the Reception Committee for Young People from Occupied Countries in Europe appears to be faced with considerable difficulties.” Harpner declared himself in favour of undertaking these responsibilities “in order not to disappoint children who had waited so long for the moment to come to England.”

Mrs Warbey had to go abroad and Harpner was appointed in her place to represent the Society in the Austrian Children’s Reception Committee as joint secretary with Miss Ella Stacey who had been nominated by the Friends of Austria. Miss Stacey and another member originally nominated by the Friends of Austria organisation, H.J. Blackman continued on the Children’s Reception Committee (and it’s successor, the Anglo-Austrian Society’s Children’s Holiday Committee) for many years and devoted much time and energy to this work, Blackman as Chairman until 1965 and Miss Stacey as Hon. Secretary to the present day.

At long last the first party of 100 Austrian children, 50 boys and 50 girls accompanied by ten youth leaders arrived in England on August 5, 1947. Most of them were under-nourished and poorly clothed, carrying as their only luggage a small rucksack or even a paper parcel. They were taken by the bus to school at Fairford in Gloucestershire which was their home for the next few weeks. The Society was lucky at this stage to acquire the

services of Stormont Murray, a bearded enthusiast whose tireless work for the children in the next few years played an important part in making the whole venture a success.

Relations between the Austrian children and the British staff were excellent. Into this period falls the famous occasion when an English staff member enquired why Austrian children were always talking about a “water pistol.” She had misunderstood the Viennese dialect phrase, “Wart’ a biss’l” (Wait a moment).

On September 12, Mr. Holmes, a member of the Reception Committee, reported that the children had been extremely happy during their stay at the school. They had been medically inspected on arrival and 18 had been found in need of dental attention. New shoes had been provided for about 40, and clothing for about 30 to 40 had been given by the American Red Cross through the Bristol Women’s Voluntary Service. The Board of Trade had granted 12 clothing coupons per child and they had been allowed a third of a pint of milk per day.

The Committee placed on record its appreciation of the work of Mr. Holmes, Miss Chiverton and Mrs. Winter in making the children’s stay a success. A letter of thanks was also sent to the kitchen chef.

Visitors to the school during the three weeks had included Lady Cripps, Dr. Heinrich Schmid (the Austrian Minister), and BBC representatives who recorded a programme which was broadcast from Vienna. Two parties of children had made an outing to Oxford, and the leaders had had a day in London. An enjoyable concert had also been arranged by the children during their stay, including a ballet.

Stormont Murray gave a report to the Committee on the dispersal of the children to families with whom they stayed from September 1 until early in November. Children had been sent to the following towns – Bletchley, Halifax, High Wycombe, Liverpool, Oxford, Sheffield, Newport and Luton. More than enough homes were available in all the towns to which children had been sent. A documentation on each child’s personality and interests had been prepared by the leaders to supplement the case history supplied from Vienna. Leaders had in the main been university students under the guidance of two older people, an arrangement which had worked extremely well.

Before starting on their journey home on November 14 this first group of Austrian children in Britain assembled for a farewell party at the Archway Hall, North London. The Austrian Minister was present. Among those taking an active part, there was, thanks to the efforts of Mrs. Marie Paneth, a conjurer. When the children left the following day, they were all heavily laden with packages and presents. Even more important from the long-term point of view, Harpner was able to report to the executive committee of the Society “The reports of the local committees show clearly that the children benefited greatly in their health and that new relationships of lasting value have been created.”

Thus the first visit of Austrian children to Britain organised by the Anglo-Austrian Society was a success. The development in the following year, when not only Austrian

children came to Britain, but British children in about equal numbers visited Austria, tells its own story.

The number of Austrian and British children who visited the other country through schemes arranged by the Society in the years from 1947 onwards was:

1947 ----100	1954 ---- 1102	1961 ---- 2168
1948 ---- 472	1955 ---- 1731	1962 ---- 2031
1949 ---- 546	1956 ---- 1920	1963 ---- 2259
1950 ---- 526	1957 ---- 2046	1964 ---- 2121
1951 ---- 552	1958 ---- 2253	1965 ---- 2262
1952 ---- 668	1959 ---- 1952	1966 ---- 2395
1953 ---- 860	1960 ---- 2078	1967 ---- 2626

In 1968, the number of children taking part was 2707, of whom 1581 were British children who went to Austria and 1126 Austrian children who came to Britain.

The amount of mutual goodwill created by these journeys is not measurable in figures.

6. CULTURAL CONTACTS

As relations between Britain and Austria gradually became more normal and as economic conditions in Austria improved, the promotion of cultural contacts between the two countries became an increasingly important part of the work of the Society. After a visit to Vienna, Otto Harpner reported to the Executive Committee on the work done in Austria by the British Council in presenting British culture to the Austrian people. He also spoke of the work done by the British-Österreichische Gesellschaft in Austria, the Austrian counterpart of the Society. Owing to the existence of the British Council, Harpner said, the British-Österreichische Gesellschaft, in spite of its considerable activities, had only a supplementary part to play. In Britain, however, the Society had tasks corresponding to those both of the British Council and the British-Österreichische Gesellschaft. (The Austrian Institute in London was not founded until ten years later.)

Among the questions which arose in this connection was that of the official status of the Society. As early as July 11, 1946 the Executive Committee of the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society expressed the general opinion that it should become *the* Anglo-Austrian Society, that is, a Society of semi-official character similar to that of the British-Österreichische Gesellschaft, then newly formed. All taking part in the debate were of the opinion that it would be essential to preserve the progressive character of the Society, but

at the same time not to object to a broadening of its basis, especially as regards the cultural side.

During the debate Miss Jennie Lee and Frederick Scheu warned against broadening the Society too much. John Edwards, William Warbey and Walter Wodak were in favour of a considerable expansion, while C. Bonacina and Professor Hertz recommended expansion particularly into the cultural field.

The critical question, of course, was that of co-operation with Communist-sponsored organisations (such as the "Friends of Austria") and with cultural societies which, while not of a Communistic character themselves, had originally been founded by and affiliated to the "Free Austria Movement." While co-operation with the "Friends of Austria" for special purposes such as Aid to Austria and the Children's Reception Committee had proved fruitful, suggestions made for a "merger" between the "Friends of Austria" and the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society were always rejected by the Society's Executive Committee. Such a merger would have given the Communists a permanent foothold which might have become dangerous in view of the continued occupation of eastern Austria by the Soviet Union.

It was however felt desirable to make the Society more broadly representative in another sense. At its meeting on July 22, 1946, the Executive Committee decided to appoint three Honorary Presidents of the Society, one of whom should be the Austrian Representative in Britain (Dr. Heinrich Schmid) while the two others should be British personalities, one from the Socialist and one from the Conservative side. The Presidents were elected at the next annual meeting (on February 19, 1947.) They were, beside Dr. Schmid, John Hynd, who as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was in charge of the British Occupation Zone of Austria, and the Earl of Selborne.

The question of broadening the Society again came up at an Executive Committee meeting on October 9, 1946, when the Chairman, Tom Horabin, reported on conversations with Dr. Schmid and with Lord Selborne. It was agreed in the debate that it was not intended to influence any existing Austrian bodies, particularly those collaborating with the Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society, to dissolve, and that the Society should be "open for membership to all without distinction of party allegiance, excluding, of course, persons who are democratically unreliable such as Nazis and Fascists.

A further step towards the reorganisation of the Society was made at an Executive Committee meeting in December 9, 1946, when Mrs. Barbara Ayrton-Gould M.P. and Sir Walford Selby, formerly British Minister to Vienna, who had both actively participated in the appeal for aid to Austria, were co-opted to the Executive. As a gesture to the "other side", it was agreed to elect a Communist M.P., Phil Piratin, not to the Executive, but to the Board of the Society. This compromise solution had been accepted after correspondence between Tom Horabin, the Chairman of the Society, and Harry Pollitt, the Communist Party Leader.

Finally, at the annual general meeting which was held at the Gas Industry House, London S.W.1 on February 19, 1947 the developments of the past year were reviewed and it was resolved to change the name of the Society from Anglo-Austrian Democratic Society to Anglo-Austrian Society. "The Executive," it was stated, "thinks it advisable that both Societies in Austria (the British-Österreichische Gesellschaft) and in this country should have corresponding names, the more so as it is no longer necessary to distinguish this Society from the other Anglo-Austrian Societies in this country." The chairman " stresses the fact that no change of the principals and of the policy of the Society, as stated when the Society was formed, is intended."

In place of Tom Horabin, who had been severely injured in an aeroplane accident and was still suffering from the after-effects, John Edwards took the chair at this general meeting. At the same meeting, John Edwards announced that he had recently been appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health and for this reason could not accept re-election to the Society's Executive. The same applied to Mrs. Barbara Castle who had been appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade. Both declared their readiness to accept appointments to the Board.

Speaking for the Executive, Mrs Barbara Ayrton-Gould expressed special gratitude to John Edwards for the very valuable help he had given to the Society and to the cause in Austria. Tom Horabin was re-elected Chairman. William Warbey M.P., took over as Honorary Treasurer in place of Karl Ausch, the Austrian Socialist economic expert who had recently returned to Vienna.

With Harpner now well established as full-time Secretary of the Society, the positions of Honorary Deputy Secretaries were allowed to lapse, Frederick Scheu and Emil Muller-Sturmheim continuing as members of the Executive Committee. The Executive was further strengthened by the inclusion of two members of the parliamentary Opposition, Air-Commodore A.V. Harvey (Conservative) and Major David Renton (National Liberal). Another Labour M.P., Wing-Commander E.A.M. Shackleton, also agreed to join. To fill the place of Karl Ausch on the Executive, Alfred Magaziner, an Austrian Socialist journalist, was elected. Yet another addition to the strength of the Executive was Kenneth Lindsay, Independent M.P. for the Combined Universities.

The Representatives of the Austrian Government in Britain, Dr Heinrich Schmid, addressed the meeting, stressing the close relations between Britain and Austria. This in itself was outward proof that the Society had at last achieved the desired "semi-official" status. The Austrian Foreign Minister, Dr Gruber, who happened to be in London, was present at the meeting.

By this time the Communist-sponsored Austrian organisations in Britain had either faded out, owing to the return of their most active members to Austria, or had curtailed their activities. With the Anglo-Austrian Music Society, which had originally been sponsored by the Free Austrian Movement, the Society now maintained close relations. As a token of this, the Anglo-Austrian Society was represented on the Executive Committee of the Anglo-Austrian Music Society.

From then onwards, the Anglo-Austrian Society's work in the musical field was done in close co-operation with the Music Society, until the two for all practical purposes became sister societies. For the preparation and organisation of lectures and meetings for which the Executive Committee, consisting largely of parliamentarians was not suited, it was decided to form a group of voluntary workers, a kind of "ginger group" to assist Otto Harpner and make suggestions.

This group, known as the Organising Committee, met at monthly intervals for many years at Frederick Scheu's flat at 8c Observatory Gardens, Kensington W.8. Its membership varied. Frederick Scheu was the convener, his wife Herta Scheu the hostess. Otto Harpner was always there to give reports and gather ideas. At the first meetings Alfred Magaziner acted as Committee Chairman. Among the most active participants in the early period were Ernest Hoch, a graphic artist, Dr Cinader, an Austrian scientist, and Dr Enderl who later joined the Austrian diplomatic service (he is at time of writing Austrian Ambassador to Hungary.) Mrs Relly Lister, Paul Lister's wife, who lived next door, wrote the minutes.

At a later stage, the active members of the Organising Committee including Francis Menell, a member of the International Bureau of the Labour Party, Eric Saunders, a young Austrian-born school teacher, and Bill Hutchings, a Londoner who, while serving as a soldier with the British occupation troops in Austria, had fallen in love with the country. Some of the younger members of the Committee built up a youth club which brought together young people interested in Austria and flourished for a time as a social club.

Among the activities sponsored by the Organising Committee and its youth group was the Krampus Dance regularly held on or about December 6, the feast of Saint Nicholas, usually at Kensington Town Hall. The "Krampus," a figure of Austrian folklore, is a comic black devil with horns and tail, the regular companion of Saint Nicholas on his annual tour of inspection during which Saint Nicholas presents good children with apples and nuts while the "Krampus" chastises the naughty ones with birch and threatens to carry them away in his basket. The ceremonial appearance of the "Krampus" was the high point of these dances.

The more serious achievements of the Committee included the organisations of a number of successful lectures by Austrian visitors including well-known scientists such as Professor Hans Thirring, physicist, and representatives of Austrian literature.

The Anglo-Austrian Society together with the Anglo-Austrian Music Society also played an important part in the preparation of the Vienna State Opera season at Covent Garden in 1947 and the visit to Britain of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

7. A QUARTER CENTURY

Among the numerous associations which have as their aim the promotion of good relations between two nations, the Anglo-Austrian Society occupies a unique position. There is probably no other society in the world which works on such a wide basis to spread knowledge and mutual acquaintance between the peoples of two countries.

There are two kinds of cultural contacts. Those that consist of visits of famous artists, professors or political leaders to the other country, together with the tours of theatrical companies and the arranging of exhibitions; and those that consist of journeys of ordinary people to another country, who meet other ordinary people there and get to know their families. While the Anglo-Austrian Society has done its part in promoting the first kind of contacts, it has had its most important effects with contacts of the second kind which may in the long run be even more durable.

In the quarter century which has passed since the formation of the Anglo-Austrian Society, the work which Otto Harpner did, building on the foundations laid by the originators of the Society, has borne fruit. His work was continued and further developed after his death in 1959 by his widow, Mrs. Lisa Harpner, and by Walter Foster who had acted as Otto Harpner's right-hand man for many years.

The progress of the Anglo-Austrian Society is marked by a number of high points: among them the first visit of the Vienna State Opera to Britain in 1947 and the first visit of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in 1948, followed by the Vienna Boys Choir in 1950 and by many more. Membership of the Society has greatly increased, particularly in recent years. But perhaps the most important thing from the point of view of Anglo-Austrian relations was the development of holiday exchanges and travel for young people: In 1968 nearly 16,000 young people, schoolchildren and students, travelled between Britain and Austria by special trains and 45 flights of airliners chartered by the Society from Austrian Airlines.

The children who benefited from the exchanges in the first years after the war have now become adults. And there have been many touching examples of the delight with which young men and women in Britain and in Austria recall the experience of their first meeting, as children travelling under the auspices of the Society, with the life of the other country.

That there is a special relationship between Britain and Austria cannot be doubted. The connections between the two countries go far back into history. Certain similarities of temperament may have helped to draw the British and the Austrians nearer together. Certain contrasts may have added piquancy and interest to the relationship. The unfortunate experiences of two World Wars have not broken the secret link and the British occupation of parts of Austria between 1945 and 1955 has in no way estranged the two countries but helped to form new personal and cultural links. Developments in

the economic field (such as EFTA) and in world politics have also served to draw the two countries closer together.

But at the basis there is the steady growth of friendship between the British and the Austrians.. The Anglo-Austrian Society was fortunate in being able to help in strengthening this friendship for a quarter of a century.