

# Misunderstood Queen

By Father John S. Kennedy

Maria Theresa of Habsburg (1717-1780), who ruled Austria for 40 years, has, in some quarters, the reputation of having been an unenlightened despot. Not so, says Edward Crankshaw, author of a new biography, "Maria Theresa" (Viking, \$6.95).

He finds much to admire in this beautiful woman who, at the age of 23, found herself thrust upon the Austrian throne at the death of her father. She was without any preparation; her father had excluded her from the royal business, had provided her no training, and left the affairs of Austria in a mess.

In the very year of her succession, 1740, Frederick II came to the throne of Prussia. He was to be a thorn in her side throughout her reign. Hardly had it begun when he invaded the Austrian province of Silesia, and for the next seven years warfare over its possession continued. Austria lost.

It was not only upstart Prussia with which she had to contend. The France of Louis XV was her enemy, and there was trouble and sometimes tumult in various sections of the far-reaching Austrian realm.

To meet these challenges, Maria Theresa had no army, had no money. The advisers and assistants she had inherited were mediocre and decrepit. She had to perform a gigantic task of reorganization, and had to find men capable of carrying it out. Gradually, she managed to do both.

One of her principal problems was the virtual independence of the great magnates, nobles with vast estates and wealth, who paid no taxes whatever. Taxes were exacted solely of the masses of peasants, who, in addition, bore the terrible weight of the warfare continually waged across the land, destroying their home and their means of sustenance.

Maria Theresa changed the tax base. Despite their bellows

of outrage, she made levies on the rich. She also developed a standing army. She improved and extended education on all levels. In the space of less than a decade, she had become a formidable ruler, one whose reign benefited the people.

But her reign had its ineradicable blots. One of these was the first partition of Poland in 1772. In that year, Poland was carved up by Russia, Prussia, and Austria. This, however, was not the work of Maria Theresa, but of her son Joseph who, on his father's death in 1767, had become co-regent of Austria and disregarded his mother's anguished protest.

Joseph, egotistical beyond belief and harshly at odds with her, intensely admired her old enemy, Frederick of Prussia, and connived with him and Catherine of Russia, of whom Maria Theresa was distrustful, in the brutal seizure of Poland.

Another of her children who brought distress to Maria Theresa was her daughter Marie Antoinette, married at 16 to the Dauphin of France who was to become Louis XVI. It is hardly to Maria Theresa's credit that she allowed the beautiful but silly youngster to be used as a pawn in European politics, but this was the practice of the times.

The marriage was arranged merely for political reasons, and Marie Antoinette was wholly un-

prepared for the role of queen. Her indiscretions, blunders, and follies pained her mother, but the latter was spared knowing of Marie Antoinette's gruesome ending.

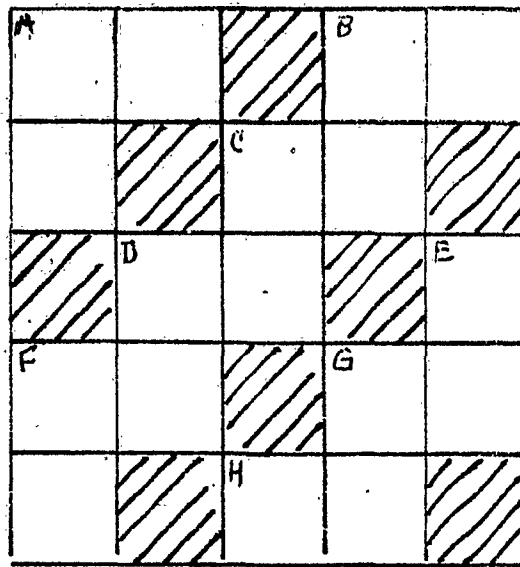
A factor in Maria Theresa's unfavorable reputation is her devout Catholicism. Her faith was absolute and she assisted at Mass daily. She was strongly averse to the ideas of the so-called Enlightenment, and she used stern means to prevent their expression. But how much this opposition, and repression is attributable to her religious convictions, and how much to her devotion to the old political and social order, one cannot really say.

There were paradoxical elements in her. On the one hand, she had a lofty notion of her position and authority. On the other hand, she could not abide yes-men and looked for superior loyalty from those who disagreed with her. She could be extraordinarily kind to a child-named Mozart, but had no perception of his musical genius and gave him no patronage.

In her days, music of the highest excellence burst forth in Vienna. Not only was there Mozart, but Haydn, Gluck, and others of exceptional and enduring stature. This rich flowering at just that time is unaccountable. Certainly Maria Theresa had nothing to do with it. These immortals were to her no more than entertainers.

## Mini-Math

By Sam Stein



### HORIZONTAL

- A +1
- B +2
- C +3
- D -3
- F -4
- G +1
- H -6

### VERTICAL

- A +3
- B +4
- C -7
- D +2
- E +4
- F -8
- G -3

Answer on Page 9B

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Mini-Math is worked like a crossword puzzle. Use numbers 1 through 5 only. For example: (A) Horizontal may call for +3 in two squares, which may be (+4 and -1), (+5 and -2), (+1 and +2), (-2 and +5), etc. The same with Verticals.



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