

'The formal signing in Schloss Belvedere' from Neuer Kurier (16 May 1955)


Caption: The day after the signing of the Austrian State Treaty, the Vienna daily newspaper Neuer Kurier reports on the event.

Source: Neuer Kurier. R.Herausgeber Dichand, Hans. 16.05.1955. Wien: Neuer Kurier G.m.b.H. "Die feierliche Unterzeichnung im Schloß Belvedere", p. 3.

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The formal signing in Schloss Belvedere

Vienna, 16 May (from our own correspondent).

So that was the day that brought freedom to Austria: for years it had been longed for, and now, suddenly, so incredibly suddenly, it had arrived. It was a red-letter day for Austria, joyfully emotional, and, for this tormented, brave country, it was an occasion for flags, flowers, and glittering functions! In this article, we shall recount the story of the day that marked the start of Year Zero in Austria's history.

First of all, a report from a member of our editorial staff who attended the signing of the international treaty in the Marble Hall in Schloss Belvedere:

11.24: the French Foreign Minister, Antoine Pinay, has just arrived. The Federal Chancellor, Julius Raab, and the Foreign Minister, Leopold Figl, present to him the members of the Austrian Government and other eminent Austrians, as they have done previously to his Soviet, British and American colleagues. Mr Pinay is dressed in a dark blue suit, his curly hair flecked with grey. In the background, the American Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, is in conversation with the Ambassador, Dr Gruber. Mr Dulles is similarly dressed in a dark blue suit, with a red-white-red floral rosette in his buttonhole.

By the window in the left wing of the hall, the British Foreign Secretary, Harold Macmillan, looking very much like his Prime Minister, Anthony Eden, is wearing a black suit, a silver-grey tie with a pearl pin and, across his waistcoat, a gold watch-chain. Beside him, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Vladimir Molotov, wearing a discreetly patterned black suit and, instead of the usual pince-nez, gold-rimmed spectacles. The many thousands in the Lower Belvedere recognised the two diplomats some time ago: the little flags wave excitedly, and Mr Macmillan and Mr Molotov return the greeting from behind the window.

The individual delegations, each about 20 strong, have taken up their positions in the right wing of the hall behind the long table, which is covered with a carmine red cloth. Only three uniforms stand out from the ranks: the sky-blue and gold-braid of a high-ranking Soviet officer and the khaki of two British officers, one of whom is also wearing the traditional Scottish kilt.

11.28: the Foreign Ministers and their Ambassadors have taken their places. Flashbulbs explode around them like flashes of lightening. One minute later, Mr Molotov sets his signature beside the four seals on the international treaty. His signature flows over the paper without a moment's hesitation. He takes off his glasses, and his piercing black eyes under luxuriant raised eyebrows scrutinise the furiously busy phalanx of cameramen. One minute later, his Ambassador, Leonid Ilichov, has signed. The folder containing the international treaty is passed to the other side of the table. Foreign Secretary Harold Macmillan's signature follows at 11.31, and that of Sir Geoffrey Wallinger immediately after.

Antoine Pinay waits with his pen at the ready. Then the treaty is once again carried to the other end of the table. Secretary of State Dulles pushes the document into position so that the page with the four light-red seals lies diagonally in front of him. At 11.32 his pen flies across the paper, and Ambassador Thompson follows him in signing.

And now the signature of Foreign Minister Antoine Pinay and Ambassador Lalouette. At 11.34, Austria's Foreign Minister is finally able to put his signature to the document. He does it after a moment's hesitation, quite deliberately and importantly.

The planned speeches by the Foreign Ministers have been assumed to take two minutes. Mr Molotov, the first speaker, takes seven times as long. His voice sounds high-pitched, a little soft, now and again clear and sharp, such as when the word 'Germany' is mentioned. After Mr Molotov has spoken, Mr Macmillan, Mr Dulles and Mr Pinay take their turns, and finally the Austrian Foreign Minister, who declares: 'Austria is free!'

The French windows leading onto the balcony open. The four Foreign Ministers go out to face the crowd of many thousands. The contours of an anti-aircraft bunker fade into the misty distance. Peals of bells ring out over the city. A wave of enthusiasm breaks on the walls of the Prinz-Eugenschen Schloss: Austria's Foreign Minister holds the international treaty high above his head in both hands ...