

'No Austrian State Treaty until the Russians are prepared to withdraw' from the Wiener Kurier (19 February 1954)

Caption: On 19 February 1954, the Austrian daily newspaper Wiener Kurier outlines the positions of the various negotiators at the Berlin Conference, attended by delegates from the four powers occupying Austria.

Source: Wiener Kurier. 19.02.1954, Nr. 41; 10. Jg. Wien. "Der Staatsvertrag ist erst möglich, wenn Russen zur Räumung bereit sind", p. 1; 8.

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No Austrian State Treaty until the Russians are prepared to withdraw

Berlin, February 19 (WK). The Berlin Conference attended by the Foreign Ministers of the Four Powers concluded yesterday evening with the following results: there is to be no State Treaty for Austria, and Germany is to remain divided for the time being. However, a conference on problems relating to Korea and, possibly, Indo-China will begin in Geneva on 26 April. The Foreign Ministers of the Four Great Powers also gave an assurance that they would comply with the United Nations Resolution of 28 November 1953 by holding an exchange of views on disarmament issues. Two final counterproposals from the Austrian Federal Government and an appeal by Foreign Minister Leopold Figl merely elicited the usual *Nyet* from Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister.

The Four-Power Conference broke up with no indication as to when the Austrian Question might be resolved. Austria is therefore, to all intents and purposes, in the same position as she was before the Conference, the only difference being that her hopes of an early return to independence have now been crushed. By accepting the Soviet conditions, Austria would have traded her future freedom for a State Treaty, and that was an unacceptable price to pay.

The question of the State Treaty has thus been consigned once again to the normal diplomatic channels, through which it can be further discussed by the Four Powers. A solution could be found at any time if the Soviet Union were to fulfil the basic conditions. The Foreign Ministers of the Western Powers made it abundantly clear that an agreement was out of the question as long as the Soviet Union remained unwilling to end its occupation of Austria.

US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles outlined the Western Powers' position by saying that he did not believe there was any point at all in pretending to the Austrian people, to the people of Britain, France and the US and to the world that a State Treaty was about to be signed as long as it evidently remained an element of Soviet policy to keep troops stationed in Austria indefinitely, for a period that could stretch to many, many years. As long as this was the intention of the Soviet Union, he added, the West should not delude itself into thinking that there was any possibility of the ambassadors of the Four Powers sitting down in Vienna to talk about the Austrian Question. As soon as the Soviet Union abandoned its present position, however, a State Treaty could be quickly concluded.

Curtain down at 4.30 p.m.

Yesterday, between 3 and 4.30 p.m., the final act of the Austrian drama was played out at the Allied Control Council headquarters in West Berlin. It was about half past four when the Soviet Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, stated that, for him, the discussions on Austria were now over. And so the last session devoted to the Austrian Question ended without the Soviet Union having dropped its demands for continued Soviet occupation of Austria after the conclusion of the State Treaty and for restrictions on the right of Austria to conduct its own foreign policy as a sovereign nation. The final day of the Conference had come and gone without the State Treaty being signed, as the Western Powers had proposed. At exactly 4.30 p.m., the Austrian delegation rose; handshakes were exchanged, and then the Austrian delegation left the conference building. The Austrian delegation will fly back to Vienna today, arriving at Tulln airport this evening at 7.25.

In a final proposal on the Austrian Question, the Soviet Foreign Minister suggested that the Big Four should issue a statement to the effect that negotiations on the State Treaty would be continued through diplomatic channels in Vienna with Austrian participation. In response to this suggestion, the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, proposed that negotiations be resumed when the Soviet Union had decided on an early definitive date for the withdrawal of its troops from Austria in accordance with Article 33. Mr Molotov, said Dulles, was implying that the conclusion of the State Treaty was entirely dependent on the negotiation of issues that could be resolved at the bargaining table. The real question was whether there was to be a treaty or not. The obstacle, said the Secretary of State, lay in the unwillingness of the Soviet Union to take due account of the objective of the State Treaty, namely the restoration of a sovereign, democratic and independent Austria. That objective was unattainable as long as one of the Powers insisted on keeping its

troops in Austria for an unlimited time.

The Austrian Foreign Minister, Leopold Figl, had previously expressed the same view. In an effort to find a compromise which would satisfy Austria's minimum requirements, he proposed that the period of occupation of 90 days envisaged in the draft treaty be prolonged but not beyond 30 June 1955. Mr Molotov rejected this proposal.

Mr Figl put another compromise on the table, whereby Article 56 would be amended to allow the four Occupying Powers to monitor the implementation of the Treaty indefinitely rather than for 18 months, as provided in the draft. This concession was as far as Figl could go without impinging upon Austria's future sovereignty, but it met with another *Nyet* from Molotov.

Oilfields not inexhaustible, says Bidault

The French Foreign Minister, Mr Georges Bidault, focused particularly on Article 35 of the draft State Treaty. If the State Treaty had been concluded in 1949, he said, Austria would have regained all her rights in respect of her oilfields in 1982. If it were signed now, Austria would not accede to those rights until 1987; if the Treaty were not signed now in Berlin, he wondered when Austria would ever be able to benefit from her oilfields. By their very nature, said Bidault, oilfields were not inexhaustible, and a further delay could well result in the exhaustion of the fields before they returned to Austrian control. This question had to be considered too and should serve as an argument for the earliest possible signing of the Treaty. But this appeal to Vyacheslav Molotov, like others before it, fell on deaf ears. The Foreign Ministers must surely appreciate, said Molotov, that an agreement on the State Treaty was not possible at the present time.

The Austrian Foreign Minister, Leopold Figl, then made a statement in which he expressed his country's thanks for having been given the opportunity to present its case in Berlin. He then went on, however, to express profound disappointment that the Conference had failed to produce the Treaty. The dismay of the Austrian people would be great, he said, and would inevitably be tinged with bitterness. The painstaking building process would nevertheless continue unabated; Austria was also in favour of further negotiations in Vienna.

Bruno Kreisky, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasised that they were returning to Vienna empty-handed. The Federal Government had gone to the very brink in its bid to engineer a last-minute agreement. Finally, Mr Molotov said that he wished to express the thanks of the Soviet delegation to Mr Figl for having played such an active part in the discussions.

A terse communiqué

The end of yesterday's session was announced by the reverberant peals of the Liberty Bell in West Berlin City Hall. As has already been briefly mentioned, the Foreign Ministers' communiqué states that a decision has been taken to convene a conference of representatives of the United States, France, the United Kingdom, the USSR, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of Korea and other countries directly involved in the hostilities in Korea that wish to attend the conference, which will be held in Geneva on 26 April for the purpose of negotiating a peaceful settlement of the Korean Question. The problem of restoring peace in Indo-China will also be discussed there. The communiqué also refers to the agreement by all parties that neither the invitation to the conference nor the holding of the conference implies diplomatic recognition of any country to which such recognition has not already been granted. The communiqué then goes on to refer to disarmament and to the absence of any agreement on Germany, Austria and European security, despite a comprehensive exchange of views on these questions.

Dulles: 'fundamental differences'

In his closing address, the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, stated that the lack of success in Berlin resulted not so much from a lack of effort as from fundamental differences between the views of East and West. The Western Powers had been willing to trust the German and Austrian peoples, he said, but the

Soviet Union was not. Moreover, the Soviet Union believed that its security continued to depend on the preservation of an imbalance of power which enabled it to exert pressure on every country. Further study would be devoted to ways of relieving the plight of the Germans and Austrians.

The Foreign Ministers left Berlin without having taken a decision on the German Question. According to a British spokesman, however, the High Commissioners were instructed to contact the Soviet High Commissioner shortly to discuss the relaxation of certain restrictions affecting relations between the Federal Republic and the Soviet Zone.

Addressing US troops in Berlin yesterday, John Foster Dulles emphasised that the Western Powers were firmly resolved to keep their armed forces in Berlin.

Regarding the outcome of the Conference, diplomatic sources in London expressed the view that the Berlin decisions testified to a desire to avert a 'Hot War' but that the Conference had not succeeded in ending the Cold War. The belief in London is that this setback should expedite the ratification of the European Defence Community Treaty. Particular regret was expressed at the fact that Austria had not obtained a State Treaty.

French circles welcomed the planned Far East conference, with particular regard to Indo-China, but opinion in France is divided on the impact of the Berlin Conference on the EDC Treaty.