

Interview with Otto von Habsburg: the fifth EU enlargement (Pöcking, 5 and 6 February 2004)

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[Philippe Nicolet] Allow me to ask you one last question on your vision of Europe, the Europe you have dreamt of and fought for in the European Parliament and, lastly, the Europe of today. Is this Europe, generally speaking, in keeping with your vision and is it moving towards the destination that you are hoping for?

[Otto von Habsburg] Yes, quite so. Quite so. I accept that we have suffered some setbacks. I have never been one to believe in a 'paradise now' strategy. As a sinner, I understand how long and arduous the road to heaven is, but our route is the logical one to choose. And, when you consider the successes, it is fantastic, nonetheless. When you think of what will happen on the first of May: ten nations are going to be able to join us. If we had been told that twenty years ago, do you think that many people would have believed it? No.

[Philippe Nicolet] What about yourself? Would not you have believed it?

[Otto von Habsburg] No. I believed in it, but I did not believe that I should see it.

[Philippe Nicolet] And now you can see it. I imagine that this must be a deeply emotional experience for you.

[Otto von Habsburg] Yes, indeed. Indeed it is. Especially when the frontiers fell. You see, even today, every time I cross the frontiers that now have disappeared, I still experience a feeling of pleasure because I remember what these frontiers were, and now this is no longer so.

[Philippe Nicolet] Will those of Switzerland also fall, in your opinion?

[Otto von Habsburg] Of course, they will fall. When? I have no idea. One must be patient. Progress must be made step by step. Perhaps it will go a little faster, perhaps a little more slowly. After all, when one has seven children and 23 grandchildren, as I have, one must be patient because it is their world as well. They will see it. It is not crucial that I should do so.