

Letter from Léon Marchal to the members of the Standing Committee (Strasbourg, 1 March 1956)

Caption: On 1 March 1956, Léon Marchal, Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, sends a letter to the members of the Standing Committee in which he outlines the procedure for Austria's accession to the Council of Europe and specifies the number of seats to be allocated to Austria when it becomes a full member of the Council.

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A. 2500

1st March, 1956

Sir,

At the request of the President of the Consultative Assembly and following my letter of 28th February, 1956 to M. Guy Mollet (of which I enclose a copy), I now write to ask your opinion as a member of the Standing Committee on the question of inviting Austria to become a full member of the Council of Europe.

As I explained in my letter under reference, the Committee of Ministers is ready, according to the terms of Article 4 of the Statute, to issue an early invitation to Austria to that effect. But in view of the lapse of five years since the Assembly adopted Resolution 9 (51) urging the Committee of Ministers to take the earliest opportunity of inviting Austria to join the Council, the Ministers have preferred to seek the Assembly's advice once again.

In spite of the fact that the first part of the Eighth Session of the Consultative Assembly is due to begin in only six weeks' time, M. Guy Mollet has thought it best, for the reasons advanced in my letter of 28th February, not to await the opening of the Session in order to ask the Assembly for its opinion. For, unless an invitation to Austria can be issued by the Committee of Ministers within the next few days, it may not be possible for the Austrian Government to go through the various constitutional formalities necessary to ensure that Austrian representatives may sit in the Assembly with full rights on 16th April.

In reaching this decision, the President has borne in mind the fact that the Assembly as a whole expressed in the clearest terms its feelings on the question of Austrian accession to the Council, by Resolution 9 of 1951, and that, since May, 1952, Austrian Observers have been allowed to take part in the work of the Assembly's Committees. Moreover, in Resolution 57 of 1954 the Consultative Assembly demonstrated its readiness to allow Austrian observers to speak on the floor of the Assembly itself: it was only for procedural reasons that this wish was not carried into practice.

In all these circumstances, M. Mollet considers that he can rely on members of the Assembly to understand his reasons for resorting to the present shortened procedure.

In view of the size of the population of Austria, which is 6,920,000, and of the fact that the number of Observers Austria sends to the Consultative Assembly at present is six, the Committee of Ministers proposes that Austria should be allotted six seats in the Assembly upon joining the council as a full member. Sweden, with a population of 6,803,000 (1948 figures) also has six seats.

I shall be most grateful if you will kindly let me know as soon as possible whether you are in agreement with the proposals of the Committee of Ministers. Owing to the urgency of the matter, I suggest that you send me a reply by telegram, and if I do not hear from you before 8th March I shall assume that you are in general agreement.

I enclose copies of Resolutions 9 (51) and 57 (54).

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

L. Marchal