

Debates at the Committee of Ministers on the accession of Austria to the Council of Europe (4 November 1949)

Caption: On 4 November 1949, meeting in Paris at the French Foreign Ministry, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe considers that it would be premature for Austria to accede to the Council of Europe insofar as the country has not regained full sovereignty.

Source: Council of Europe - Committee of Ministers. Documents confidential. Second Session. 3rd-5th November 1949. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris. 1949. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Copyright: (c) Council of Europe

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/debates_at_the_committee_of_ministers_on_the_accession_of_austria_to_the_council_of_europe_4_november_1949-en-23286f68-f5a3-4b5e-9fe1-86ce1927306e.html

Publication date: 06/09/2012

Debates at the Committee of Ministers on the accession of Austria to the Council of Europe (4 November 1949)

Admission of new Members and new Associate Members

The CHAIRMAN asked his colleagues to consider Item 2 (b) of the Agenda concerning the admission of new Members. The Assembly's Proposal recommended that the Committee of Ministers should consider, before the next Ordinary or Extraordinary Session of the Assembly, the question of the admission of new Members and new Associate Members to the Council of Europe. This Recommendation referred especially to Western Germany, but it also applied to the Saar and Austria.

M. SCHUMAN (France) reminded the meeting that the Statute did not envisage "applications" from States or countries which might qualify for admission to the Council of Europe, but referred to the "invitations" which might be addressed to them.

With regard to Austria, M. Schuman had not any particular information on the attitude of the Austrian Government, but he wondered if, in the present state of affairs, it would be opportune to address an invitation to Vienna until the Treaty had been concluded. The Committee should take care not to risk a refusal, and also not to place the invited State in an embarrassing position.

Mr. BEVIN (United Kingdom) considered that the cases of Germany, Austria and the Saar should be treated separately. As regards Germany, it seemed to him desirable that the members of the Committee should define their position without taking a decision for the moment. On the one hand, certain questions in Germany still remained to be settled between the Occupying Powers and the Federal Government. On the other hand, one of the Powers responsible for foreign affairs in Germany was not represented at this meeting and its intentions were not known. The opinion of the members of the Committee with regard to the eventual admission of Germany, however, was of great importance to the Occupying Powers.

The decision could therefore be postponed until these particular questions had been settled by the Occupying Powers. It had, moreover, been decided during the previous meeting, to consult the Standing Committee. That gave rise to a complicated situation which should be clarified now.

Mr. Bevin stated that he was, however, in favour of admitting Germany as soon as possible to the Council of Europe as an Associate Member, with the reservation that certain questions still outstanding with the Federal Government must be settled.

The CHAIRMAN, referring to Mr. Bevin's suggestion, asked his colleagues if they approved the proposal to treat separately each of the three cases submitted to the Committee for study. He proposed that they should first consider that of Austria.

It was thus decided.

Mr. BEVIN (United Kingdom) considered that it would be undesirable to address an invitation to the Austrian Government at the present time. It might find it embarrassing. It would be better to wait until the Occupation troops had been withdrawn and until Austria had recovered her complete sovereignty. Account must be taken of the fact that the Soviet troops were at present stationed on Austrian territory and that, if a serious incident were to occur, the Powers might find themselves obliged to take measures to ensure the protection of Austria. The Government must not, therefore, be placed in an embarrassing position so long as it had not overcome its present difficulties. This would be in the interest of Austria, as much as in the interest of the Council of Europe. In these circumstances, it would be preferable to leave the question in abeyance until the signature of the Treaty.

Mr. Bevin hoped that this delay would not be too long. At the appropriate moment, the invitation addressed to Austria to join the Council of Europe would receive complete support, at least from the British Government.

M. SCHUMAN (France) agreed with Mr. Bevin's remarks.

M. STIKKER (Netherlands) also stated that he was anxious to see Austria enter the Council of Europe as soon as possible. Meanwhile, according to his information, such an invitation, if it were sent at this moment, would be premature and would place the Austrian Government in an embarrassing position.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking as Danish representative, also stated that he was in favour of this view of the matter. For the reasons given by Mr. Bevin, he also considered that an invitation would be premature and that, consequently, it would be wiser to await the signature of the Peace Treaty.

Count SFORZA (Italy), speaking as representative of a State adjoining Austria, was particularly anxious to establish good relations with that country. He agreed with Mr. Bevin's Proposal, but he thought that it would be better to inform Austria of the feelings of friendship and solidarity which had been expressed by the Committee during this meeting.

MM. UNDEN (Sweden), **LANGE** (Norway) and **VAN ZEELAND** (Belgium) stated that they agreed with the ideas just expressed.

Mr. MACBRIDE (Ireland), in agreeing, stated that his views were completely identical with those expressed by Count Sforza.

MM. TSALDARIS (Greece), **SADAK** (Turkey) and **BECH** (Luxembourg) also supported the proposed procedure.

The CHAIRMAN, having noted the unanimity of the Committee on the attitude to be taken with regard to the future admission of Austria, then passed to the question of the admission of Germany.