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Official report of debates

Exposé de M. KLAUS, dans le cadre du débat sur la politique générale du Conseil de l'Europe

Mr Pierre PFLIMLIN (France, President of the Assembly)*: I should like to express to his Excellency, the Chancellor of the Austrian Republic, the feelings of warm satisfaction felt by all the members of the Assembly when they learnt that he had accepted our invitation to come to Strasbourg to address us in person. The Assembly is very sensible of the honour which the Chancellor is paying us by his visit.

(Applause).

I call Mr. Klaus.

Mr Josef KLAUS (Federal Chancellor of the Austrian Republic)*: Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen, *civis Europaeus sum* – I am a citizen of Europe: inspired by an old Roman custom those are the first words of homage and introduction which the Austrian Federal Chancellor addresses to you, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Representatives from seventeen European nations, of European thought, European ethics and the European way of life. In greeting you as the envoys of so many countries with different languages, I salute the diversity of this Continent, a diversity decreed by history. But in greeting you as members of this distinguished Assembly, which is a European body of incomparable value, I also salute the unity in diversity for which we strive, our common European way of thinking, the “European idea” that unites us.

Let me first of all thank the President of this Assembly, Mr Pierre Pflimlin, who has been kind enough to invite me to address you. Mr President, in thanking you I should like to refer to three aspects of your activities and personality. First, let me thank the President elected for the present Session by this distinguished Assembly. Secondly, let me also extend my gratitude to the mayor of Strasbourg, which has become a symbol for the nations of Europe through its magnificent cathedral, and – since the time when the Council of Europe decided to make the city its seat – a widely known meeting-place for people from all over Europe. And, last but not least, let me thank you personally: you are widely known beyond the borders of France as one who is to be numbered among the “great Europeans”.

Furthermore I should like to thank the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Mr Peter Smithers, whose personal hospitality I have been enjoying during these hours of my stay.

Thank you all, Ladies and Gentlemen, for being so kind as to listen to the “European creed” of a country which is an old member of the European cultural community, to the profession of Austria’s faith in Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you have given Article 3 of the Statute of the Council of Europe the following wording:

In this report:

- speeches in English are reported in full;
- speeches in other languages are reported using the interpretation and are marked with an asterisk (*);
- speeches in German and Italian are reproduced in full in a separate document.

“Every Member of the Council of Europe accepts the principles of the rule of law and the enjoyment by all persons within its jurisdiction of human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Thereby the Strasbourg architects of Europe have recognised the ultimate basis of every community, beginning their work in the spirit of Ovide: *Sua sponte, sine lege, fidem rectumque colebant*.

Reflecting on how and whereby the Council of Europe, after its establishment in 1949, began its work, which has become so fruitful for the nations of Europe, and if law is to be considered the archetype of all order in the intellectual and social affairs of man, let us vary a line from the monologue in Goethe's Faust and say: *“In the beginning was the law”*. The first great act of this Assembly was the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights signed on 4th November 1950. I regard this as a truly fortunate beginning for Europe and in my view it is of good omen that, as far as I am informed, among the 45 Conventions concluded in the meantime under your auspices, among all the agreements the Council of Europe has helped to bring about, the “Magna Charta” of European fundamental rights has received the highest number of signatures. Nevertheless, as all human efforts, this agreement will be further modified in the course of time.

Whatever may be the political and general philosophy of the members of this European Assembly, whatever countries they may represent, whatever traditions and customs they may adhere to, we find at the beginning of their work as European parliamentary delegates the creation of the above-mentioned agreement. How fortunate for the European nations striving towards unity that the first article of the European creed contains a recognition of the fundamental rights of man, a recognition of the inviolable dignity and value of the human individual.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the man to whom you have given permission to address you today would like to hand over his visiting card to you with a respectful bow to law. This comes from personal conviction, but it also comes from the Head of a country which is of little military significance, from a man who realises that the acceptance of the principle that “right prevails over might” is the best guaranty for the preservation of his country's liberty, and that the observance of this rule is the best basis for a fruitful and successful foreign policy.

It so happens that under the Austrian Federal Constitution the Federal Chancellor's responsibility includes the taking of initiatives for legislative measures concerning the principles of our Constitution which are democracy, the federal principle and the rule of law and thus the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. For that reason I am in the fortunate position of being able to say that this solemn profession of faith in the rule of law is not a mere lip service for me: during my very first year in office as Federal Chancellor it has inspired me to take an initiative which, I hope, will go beyond the confines of everyday politics and leave a permanent mark in the history of Austrian law, which has always been an integral part of the history of European law: I am referring to the reform of Austria's catalogue of fundamental rights and freedoms which goes back to the year 1867. Last year in November I summoned a commission of lawyers and experts who, under my chairmanship, will have the responsibility of adapting and supplementing Austria's fundamental rights in such a manner as to ensure that the progress in the legal field conforms to the progress in the technical and social fields.

Ladies and Gentlemen, among the achievements of our time is the awareness that the world is becoming smaller, that nations are getting into closer touch, that the continents are losing their old dimensions. The nations of Europe have become more and more conscious of the fact that the cruel feuds and wars which have divided the peoples of Europe until well into our century must end, if Europe is to survive in the world of tomorrow. That the people of this Continent are striving for unity, that they are willing to overcome the selfishness inherent in nationalism must be considered a great step forward in the progress of civilisation.

Where does Europe stand today? Who has the right to speak on behalf of all?

We have only to open a political reference-book and look up the European associations and organisations, to see that the difficulty of creating a union of European nations does not only result from the diversity and number of peoples, but also from the diversity and number of institutions and associations created by the nations of Europe. The enumeration of only a few of these organisations – EEC, Euratom, ECSC, EFTA and many others – suffices to show the richness of the European spectrum.

But when one resorts to “catchwords”, further differentiations become possible.

There are the advocates of a “greater Europe” and those who want a “little Europe”.

There are conceptions which the political commentators register under the heading of *l'Europe des patries*, Europe as a community of sovereign nations; and there is the opposite ideal: Europe as a Vaterland replacing the national States.

Among the Europeans there are “Federalists” and “Confederalists”; there are those who want to preserve a “national” structure for the unified Continent, and those who want to give it a “supranational” one. Some want Europe to be an independent “third Power”, others want to see the Continent embedded in a great “Atlantic partnership”. Finally, there are Europeans who can only imagine a “fully integrated” Europe as far as military, economic, cultural and political matters are concerned, and there are Europeans who regard this very tendency as a great danger.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is not because I want to give the impression that the pursuit of Europe appears hopeless, in view of the numerous different attitudes, opinions and philosophies, that I have taken the liberty of reviewing briefly the great mosaic of existing conceptions of the unification of Europe; I have done so because such a survey of the different points of view enables me to highlight the problems that arise in connection with Austria’s orientation towards Europe. And about this difficulty, about these Austrian problems, let me now say a few words.

Left over after the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the small country of Austria at first found it difficult to fit herself into the European political system established by the peace treaties of 1919, a system which, as we all know, did not prove long-lived. What had been handed over to the seven million Austrians, the residue of the dismembered great Empire, was regarded by many of my compatriots as well as by numerous foreign observers as a very poor basis for a new beginning, as a very small dowry for the establishment of a new State. Inevitably, at that time, many an Austrian patriot considered union with a larger economic and political body the only possible way out of that very discouraging situation. It was only when Austria had, in fact, vanished from the map in 1938 that many became aware of the historic significance and the tragic consequences of that event for the other European nations. The Austrian writer Stephan Zweig expressed that belated recognition in the following words:

“I knew that Austria was lost – but I did not yet realise how much I had lost by that. Nobody saw that Austria was the cornerstone of the wall and that Europe must break down when it was torn out.”

The Austrians did not only have to go through the “sea of blood and tears”, to quote Sir Winston Churchill’s unforgettably moving phrase, like all the other European nations, before they were able to rejoin the community of the peoples of Europe as a completely free and independent member, but even after the end of the war they had to wait for a rather long time. It was only ten years later that their hour came: 15th May 1955, when the State Treaty for the re-establishment of an independent and democratic Austria was signed. On 26th October of the same year Austria’s Parliament passed the constitutional law laying down the country’s permanent neutrality. This act was passed *“for the permanent maintenance of Austria’s external independence and the preservation of the integrity of her territory”*. It may seem strange for the Head of Government of a European State to lay so much emphasis on the desire of his country to retain its independence in addressing this Assembly which you, Ladies and Gentlemen, have formed for the express purpose of discussing ever new and ever better ways and possibilities for the pursuit of European unity.

Karl Jaspers rightly observes:

“The ethos of actual neutrality – which in smaller States reaches into the very way of life as well as into the consciousness of existence of the individual citizen – could serve as guide-post to world order. The momentum of the neutrality of small Powers, the self restraint, would then become universal.”

Ladies and Gentlemen, neutrality and independence are now the basis of our political existence, the indispensable precondition for continued friendly relations with the Great Powers, the solid basis of our good relations with our neighbours, the sine qua non of an avoidance of tension in the Danubian area of Central Europe.

We Austrians know what the unity of Europe means for everybody, including ourselves. Therefore, what Austria’s Representative requests of this distinguished Assembly and of all who think and feel as Europeans and who desire a unified Europe is this: please search for a European formula which is not too narrow and too restricted; find a European formula in which there is no “exclusivism”; strive for a European formula that provides room for all of the nations of Europe. The neutral countries, too, are a part of Europe, and they do not wish to be forced into the role of expatriates on their own Continent. “Isolation of the Neutrals” must not be the motto when the other Europeans think of creating the Europe of tomorrow. We were among the nations who warmly welcomed the Resolution passed by the Committee of Ministers in the course of its 32nd Session on 6th May 1963, because this represents an important step forward on the way to the unification of Europe.

After the liberation of Austria had been achieved, Julius Raab gave the following description of the new hopeful attitude of my compatriots:

“The most important symptom of the change that the attitude of the Austrians has undergone is that they now believe in the political and economic viability of their country. Therefore the overwhelming majority of the Austrian people wants Austria to remain an independent State and rejects any policy that tends to jeopardize that independence.”

I fully concur with that statement of my predecessor. But now I have to give you a short description of my country's economic situation so that you will understand why in the future, Austria, while fulfilling all her international obligations and strictly maintaining her neutrality, must continue to move with the great economic currents of Europe and avoid being pushed into a picturesque but sterile backwater.

Austrian economy has shown a favourable development during the last decade, a trend which has been facilitated by the favourable level of international economic activities. The various measures adopted under Austria's economic policy also contributed materially towards this development. Their main emphasis was on a well-designed growth policy; on the prevention of any major inflationary tendencies and on increasing mass incomes and raising the population's standard of living. Between 1950 and 1959, there was, among the OECD countries, only the Federal Republic of Germany and Greece which recorded higher growth rates than Austria. This growth, it is true, slackened somewhat after 1960, but in 1963 and 1964 Austria was again among the leading European countries. This rapid progress has primarily been due to the high level of investment; the changes in the economic pattern in favour of more productive branches; the shifting of manpower from agriculture to industry – a sacrifice imposed on Austrian farmers for the benefit of the Austrian people as a whole – and, last not least, due to the prevailing industrial peace and to the prevention of any serious internal crises. There exists hardly any other country throughout Europe where internal stability has been characterised by the fact that the political responsibility has, uninterruptedly for twenty years, been vested in a Government whose pattern did not change. In this Government the Federal Chancellor has been appointed by the Austrian People's Party, while the Vice-Chancellor has been delegated by the Socialist Party which is second in importance in this country.

As the social product has grown, incomes, too, have gone up. From 1950 to 1962, average per capita incomes of Austrian independent workers rose, in real terms, by 40 to 50 per cent. This increase in the incomes of the people resulted quite naturally in a corresponding increase of the living standard, a fact which was reflected by increased expenditure on the purchase of durable consumer goods.

From the description I have given of my country's economic situation – which justifies a reasonable optimism – you will readily understand that the Austrian people, with their sad experience from the inter-war period, are very anxious to be associated with the large, international economic areas which are in the making in Europe. Therefore, since the initiation of the Marshall Plan, we have co-operated in all economic schemes in Europe with a view to ensure prosperity to our economy by securing our markets with our traditional trading partners. This was the reason why we co-operated in the efforts to create a large European Free Trade Area, which then formed the objective of the intense work achieved within a Committee of OEEC. When late in 1958 it became obvious that this was impracticable because it did not meet with the approval of all member countries, we joined the European Free Trade Association. We have benefited from our cooperation in that organisation in that we have been able to intensify our trade with EFTA countries. However, our economy is so highly dependent on exports that economically we must keep pace with the European Economic Community and we cannot dispense with a continued development of favourable trade relations therewith. We certainly do hope that satisfactory solutions can be found for all countries which are interested in intra-European trade and which have to face problems similar to ours. However, the problem as to whether each of these countries can wait equally long for an overall European solution will depend on the individual country's economic structure, its economic resources or on its long-term economic policy.

We people of Austria believe that, in the interest of this country's industry, trade and agriculture, there should be no further unnecessary delay in concluding a special kind of arrangement with the European Economic Community. Ever since December 1961 we have been making efforts to enter into such negotiations, and we hope that the EEC Council of Ministers will, at the soonest possible date, issue a mandate to the Commission to take up negotiations. We Austrians realise fully that the participation of our country – its integration – in the economic dynamism of Europe is an indispensable condition for maintaining Austria free and independent. Such an arrangement, it is true, will have to take account of the particularities and reserves resulting from our firm will to abide strictly by our international obligations and to maintain, in accordance with our undertakings, “ permanent ” neutrality, which, besides, is time and again appreciated by both the East and the West in view of its high stabilising effect.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I described the political situation in my country and its economic position and I referred to the stringent conclusions which we are obliged to draw therefrom. But I should not fail to say a word now about Austria's cultural mission, simply because we believe that our country – irrespective of its small size – has still a special task to fulfil in that field. Despite certain people who are critical and pessimistic about cultural matters, I venture to say that in the fields of science and arts also, time did not stand still for the Austrian people. The young generation in Austria who are engaged

in cultural and scientific work refuse any ideas suggesting that their only function should be to watch over a cultural and scientific heritage, magnificent and important though it be. They have rightly understood what one of the outstanding Europeans of our century, Hugo von Hofmannstahl, meant when he said about Austria of the era after 1918: "It's a sad reminiscence of the grand days of our ancestors". No, Ladies and Gentlemen, these Austrians devoted to cultural work and consciously feeling bound to the tradition of bygone days, these Austrians are not mere museum caretakers whose only task is to watch over the creative work, the cultural heritage of past centuries in the cases like trustees who, out of anxiety that the assets entrusted to them may be fully maintained, prefer to waive enjoyment of these assets.

Recognising clearly these special responsibilities which devolve upon us, Dr Piffl-Percevie, Austrian Minister of Education, submitted to the recent General Conference of UNESCO in Paris an invitation to convene all European Ministers of Education in a Europe-wide conference dealing with educational problems to be held next year in Vienna, – a Europe-wide conference which shall include representatives of West, North, South and East Europe, from the Scandinavian fiords to the Mediterranean Sea, from the Atlantic Ocean to the boundless plains of Siberia.

Allow me to add this: When speaking of Vienna, people think of music; speaking of Salzburg, they remember Mozart. The Austrian people of our days consider it their foremost cultural responsibility not to enjoy alone and reserve to themselves in a selfish manner the creative work of the present, like the performance of the Vienna Festivals, the Festivals of Salzburg and Bregenz and of many other smaller places which initiated festivals after the end of the war. The Austrians consider it their responsibility to make these cultural achievements accessible to all those Europeans who, seized by the desire so typical to our time to see the world, seek recreation in our country. With its varied scenery, Austria has become one of the gardens of Europe, a modern place of recreation where the people of Europe recuperate when they travel through it on their way from the north to the south or from the west to the east or vice versa.

Mr President, as Federal Chancellor of Austria I have accepted your invitation to speak to you about Austria. There are still many problems concerning world politics on which some more remarks could be made, but I wish and intend to refrain from making them. Allow me, however, to request your further attention for a few minutes. Due to the geographical position of Austria, there is no possibility for "isolationism" for our country even if we so desired. From a glance at the map you will readily see that Austria lies at a European cross-roads and that Vienna, the Federal capital, holds a particular key-position. The changes going on in Europe today – especially those in the relations between East and West – don't leave my country untouched.

In a recent address before the Council of Europe, Dr Bruno Kreisky, Austria's Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, drew the attention of the Assembly to our country's geographical position and, in particular, emphasised the fact that our country is nearer to the capitals of the countries in Eastern Europe than all the other metropolises of Europe, and that in our country live many people whose forefathers came from countries in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe. Dr Kreisky warned us against any overestimation of Austria's possibilities, but rightly pointed out that the relations to Eastern Europe "create affinities and constitute imponderables" which are of significance.

And that is a fact, Ladies and Gentlemen, which must not be neglected by the political architects of the future Europe, namely the fact that Eastern Europe is also part of Europe. Europe does not end at the Eastern borders of my country. The city of Vienna should not be regarded as "the terminus of the West" as Dr Drimmel, Vice-Mayor of Vienna, rightly put it. The future house of Europe would have to be viewed by us Austrians as an unfinished and incomplete structure if it consisted of a central front and a western wing while the eastern wing remained unfinished. Austria adheres to the liberal-democratic way of life. We hold fast to Western thinking, to Western traditions and habits. We know that the countries of Eastern Europe have a social system which has nothing in common with our own. But we welcome that evolution in the countries of Eastern Europe which makes us hope that these peoples will come closer to greater Europe. The Council of Europe initiated a great number of agreements and sponsored many European conferences whose object was not to discuss controversial political problems but to discuss very important and useful arrangements which produce beneficial effects in many spheres of social life. I refer in this connection – to give the most recent examples – to the important European Conference on Air Pollution, which was held at Strasbourg last

year and to the Parliamentary and Scientific Conference which was convened in Vienna last May. I know of your efforts to attain a Europe-wide co-operation, for instance, in the fields of meteorology and river conservancy. As the representatives of a country of recreation and tourism we are highly interested in these activities. To me, it would appear reasonable to consider seriously an invitation to the countries of Eastern Europe in order to arouse at first their interest in European co-operation in all of those spheres where a new climate for co-operation between the West and the East could be created, irrespective of political resentments and divergencies. I fully endorse the ideas expressed in our Recommendation 389 last May which stated that it was a *"duty of the Council of Europe to contribute both towards uniting free and democratic Europe and reducing tensions between East and West"*.

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen, you have before you an important and long agenda. I do not wish to abuse the hospitality which you have generously extended to me. In the fifteen years of its existence, the Council of Europe has displayed an activity which has been extremely beneficial to the peoples of Europe. The agreements, recommendations, debates and discussions have been to the advantage of all member countries. The flexibility of your Statute, the wise limitation of your scope of activities to fields where any competition with other European organisations is avoided make Strasbourg and the Council of Europe an ideal meeting-place for all Europeans. This is your great asset, because it is precisely for this reason that Strasbourg has become a sign-post showing the way to greater Europe, to that Europe of which at all times the best Europeans have dreamt. May it become possible that, even in critical moments, when the European family is at variance, the common philosophy to which we adhere should prove its worth and prevail over national interests.

We have a regrettable dispute on the issue of South Tyrol with Italy, our neighbour with whom we desire to entertain good and friendly relations. We are conducting very intensive negotiations on that problem with the Italian Government. I should like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank the Council of Europe for actively assisting in the elimination of the existing difficulties between Italy and Austria by setting up a sub-committee.

In concluding I should like to say this: Austria's main contribution towards reducing tension between East and West is her foreign policy which provides the basis for peaceful relations in the geographical area around our own territory. Since 1955, Austria has been a stabilising factor in Europe, and since then it has been one of the basic principles of our foreign policy to maintain undisturbed and untroubled relations with the main signatories of the State Treaty. For some time, we have had very good and friendly relations with Yugoslavia and in recent months there has been a remarkable improvement of our relations with Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Poland; furthermore, we hope that the settlement of pending property issues with Czechoslovakia will result in a further improvement of our relations with that neighbour of ours. Similarly, we hope for an early settlement of unsolved property problems with Poland. The people of Austria have one great wish; to create such conditions along the borders with our neighbours as will constitute a very clear and manifest proof of the elimination of tension in this part of Europe. All our efforts in the international sphere are aimed at maintaining and ensuring Austria's present position in international relations. We believe that in pursuing this policy we act not only in our own interests but also in the interests of all nations of Europe.

The starting-point of the activity of the Council of Europe was, as I said at the beginning, the profession of faith in man, in human freedom and human dignity. Allow me to add a personal remark: I know that for people different in origin, different in their way of thinking and different in their philosophy, to live harmoniously together presupposes a great deal of tolerance on all sides. We live in a pluralistic society which cannot regard as its exclusive objective the realisation of the so-called "Christian Occident". As a Christian, as an Austrian and as a European, this profession of faith in man is for me a reliable proof of the fact that in Europe today there are men of different philosophies and of different ideologies making efforts to seek and establish a European system of human relationships whose basic principles are rooted in European (Occidental) thinking. I hope that the Council of Europe may continue to be a Europe-wide forum providing an opportunity for all Europeans to participate in your discussions. In taking the floor, I introduced myself to your Assembly by saying *civis Europaeus sum*.

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen, I request you to recognise Austria's position in Europe, as I have explained it. Not only today but also in future decades, in the "Europe of tomorrow", we Austrians wish to be able to come to this Assembly and to greet you with the same salutation: "We are citizens of Europe".

(Applause.)