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## AUSTRIA, THE REVOLUTIONS, AND THE UNIFICATION OF GERMANY

The historical significance of the year 1989 was global; it was a year in which the entire world changed dramatically.<sup>1</sup> This chapter deals with the perceptions and reactions of Austrian actors (I) to the revolutionary changes that occurred in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989–90. This will first be examined in relation to the events in Poland (II.1), and then to the dramatic events at the Hungarian border, especially the Austrian reaction to the resulting wave of East German refugees (II.2). Next to be analyzed will be the Austrian reaction to the revolutionary events in the GDR (II.3), to the developments in Czechoslovakia (II.4) and, briefly, to the events in Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia (II.5). The final sections will describe how the role of the Warsaw Pact (III) and of transnational party cooperation (IV) was evaluated, as well as the attitude of the general Austrian population toward the events that were occurring (V).

### I. Austrian actors and contexts

In addition to the Austrian chancellor Franz Vranitzky (social democrat, SPÖ), the key persons involved were the vice-chancellor and foreign minister Alois Mock (Christian-democrat, ÖVP), and Vienna's deputy mayor Erhard Busek (ÖVP), who later became minister of science. The characters, temperaments and interests of these three men could not have been more different. In 1989, the foreign policy of Austria's large coalition government was focused on the conclusion of the CSCE follow-up conference, the negotiations held in Vienna on confidence and security-building measures, and Austria's application for EU membership.<sup>2</sup> In a dynamic, multi-leveled system, there were three contexts in which Austria's perceptions and reactions developed:

- In the multilateral setting of the meetings and exchange of experiences that were part of the framework of the CSCE follow-up process in Vienna (1986–89);
- In the bilateral context of diplomatic and political contacts with representatives from Central and Eastern Europe through visits, meetings and direct communication;
- In the transnational context of networking and party cooperation.

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Grosser, 1989. *L'année où le monde a basculé* (Paris: Perrin, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Gehler, *Österreichs Weg in die Europäische Union* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2009).

How did Austria's protagonists see Central and Eastern Europe? The vantage point from which Vranitzky surveyed the Central Eastern European region was pragmatic and quite different from that of Busek, as Vranitzky himself admitted:

There were several efforts called "Central Europe cooperation." I attempted to do this at the bilateral level with the various governments—out of necessity already before the Velvet Revolution, and then, of course, afterwards. Erhard Busek was an important trendsetter because of his contacts with "dissidents" during the communist period, not a few of whom "afterwards" held and still hold important functions.<sup>3</sup>

Vranitzky's practical approach, as well as the priority he gave to the EC, was also recognized in other countries. The German journalist Theo Sommer wrote in this regard:

Vranitzky was rather suspicious of abstract temptations such as the imaginary concept of "Central Europe" or the Italian construction of a "Pentagonal," at least as a political project. This was "absolutely not an alternative or substitute for the EC," as he stated tersely. He approached the candidacy in Brussels from two directions. On one side: "... that after the internal market has been established, it is necessary for us to be part of it." And on the other side: "... that we can make an important contribution to the process of European integration."<sup>4</sup>

In his memoirs, Vranitzky does not give the events of 1989–90 a particularly prominent position; the central role is held by domestic politics. For him, Central and Eastern Europe was a geographic term not connected to politics, despite the fact that the region had a definite socio-cultural dimension. As he stated:

I do not consider Central Europe a political entity or a political project—even less do I believe in the mythical concept of Central Europe. That is too connected to a longing for the good old days, good old days that were not particularly good. Central Europe is a geographical term for me. In its framework, certain regional collaborations can certainly be conveniently carried out; nonetheless, it does not represent an alternative to the project of Western European integration.<sup>5</sup>

But Vranitzky had an international outlook; he was far from being focused only on the West:

In this sense, European thinking goes far beyond what Brussels currently represents. I would add that a culturally comprehensive understanding of Europe should not be focused entirely on the West. It would be shortsighted to ignore the creative potential of Eastern Europe, be it

<sup>3</sup> Personal written communication from Franz Vranitzky to the author, 5 June 2008, 3. Cf. Armin Thurnher and Franz Vranitzky, *Franz Vranitzky im Gespräch mit Armin Thurnher* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1992), 75; see also Erhard Busek, "Der strategische Vorteil der Österreicher gegenüber den Deutschen liegt in der Mentalität," in Michael Gehler and Imke Scharlemann, eds., *Zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie. Erfahrungen in Mittelost- und Südosteuropa. Hildesheimer Europagespräche II* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2013), 457–97.

<sup>4</sup> Direct citations in the quotation added by Theo Sommer, "Österreich, Deutschland und darüber hinaus," in Edi Keck, Karl Krammer, Heinz Lederer, Andreas Mailath-Pokorny, and Oliver Rathkolb, eds., *Die ersten 10 Jahre: Franz Vranitzky* (Vienna: D & R, [1996]), 146–55, 152.

<sup>5</sup> Vranitzky and Thurner, *Franz Vranitzky im Gespräch*, 86.

intentionally or due to oversight. It is not befitting for us in the West to be arrogant. We should also try to learn from the East.<sup>6</sup>

Unlike Mock, Vranitzky's relations with the EC were temperate. Mock was "passionate defender," whereas Vranitzky was considered a "mild advocate." As stated by an Austrian journalist:

The reasoning of the chancellor was refreshingly different from that of his foreign minister. For Mock, participating in the large market is nearly a religious goal, but it is also an act of grace that he must request from his party colleagues. In contrast, Vranitzky notes that if Austria participates, it will not only be the large market that has something to offer. Austria will function as a bridge; it is an interesting market and ideal for cooperative ventures.<sup>7</sup>

For Mock, who considered himself obliged to follow Chancellor Josef Klaus' "Ostpolitik" of the 1960s—when Austrian foreign minister Bruno Kreisky and Lujo Tončić-Sorinj first visited Budapest, Bucharest and Warsaw—the speed of the political upheavals in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989–90 was surprising. Nonetheless, both Mock and Vranitzky quickly realized the significance of the reform movements and followed them carefully, despite the fact that Mock had a much stronger historical and emotional attachment to Central and Eastern Europe than did the chancellor.

Mock did not overemphasize the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, and had made various overtures to dissidents. When he visited Bohuslav Chňoupek, the Czech foreign minister, in Prague in July 1987, Mock was the first Western foreign minister to request to see the dissident Václav Havel. Already in 1969, when he was the minister of education, Mock had nominated Havel for the Austrian State Prize for European Literature. And during his visit to Moscow in September 1988, Mock met Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov. At the CSCE follow-up conference in Vienna, there were bilateral talks with the foreign ministers George Shultz, Eduard Shevardnadze, Geoffrey Howe and Hans-Dietrich Genscher. After the arrest of Havel on 21 February 1989, Mock took the opportunity to use the CSCE machinery for inspecting questions of human rights. Then, during his visit to Prague from 7 to 8 March 1990, he met the new Czech president Havel and Cardinal František Tomášek. And when visiting Budapest on 14 March, he took part in the renaming of the "Street of the People's Republic" to "Andrássy Street." In the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Andrássy had been the minister for foreign affairs from 1871 to 1879.<sup>8</sup>

With regard to Austria's multilateral foreign policy and to developing specific plans for the Central European region, Mock and Vranitzky had common goals. They both supported the Quadragonale regional project (Austria, Hungary, Italy

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Fritz, "Klare Worte," in *Neue Zeitung*, 7 November 1987.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Eichinger and Helmut Wohnout, *Alois Mock: Ein Politiker schreibt Geschichte* (Vienna: Styria, 2008), 191–97.

and Yugoslavia) at a meeting from 11 to 12 November 1989 in Budapest, and from May 1990, the Pentagonal (the same group together with the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic).<sup>9</sup>

Whereas Vranitzky's international outlook was directed toward the West,<sup>10</sup> Busek was clearly focused on Central and Eastern Europe. He made contacts of varying intensity almost single-handedly, establishing close relationships with political dissidents and opposition groups, as for example in Hungary with József Antall of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), and to a lesser degree with Viktor Orbán from the Alliance of Young Democrats (FIDESZ), which initially held a center-left position. He did the same with Václav Klaus of the Czechoslovak Civic Democratic Party (ODS). Busek's contacts aimed in part at "old" Christian-democratic parties, which had been subjected to communist control and coopted in coalitions with the communists. These parties were having to expend a great deal of effort to break away from the past and their connections to the communists by means of the National Front. A distinction must be made between Busek's relations to the Slovak Christian Democratic Movement of Jan Čarnogurský (KDH) and to Mikuláš Dzurinda's faction, the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK). Relations with Tadeusz Mazowiecki in Poland were problematic, since he refused to let his group join the conservative anti-communist Christian European Democrat Union (EDU) supported by Mock and Busek. The connections of Busek were based less on the political network of the EDU and more on personal contacts with dissidents.<sup>11</sup>

## II. Austria's foreign policy and diplomacy—perceptions of the events of 1989

### 1. Poland

On 17 January 1989, Mock mentioned in passing at the final Vienna CSCE meeting that Austro-Polish relations were "very good." On the same occasion, Polish foreign minister Andrzej Olechowski acclaimed the conclusion of the CSCE follow-up meeting as a historic event, and stated that Austria had played

<sup>9</sup> Emil Brix, "Die Mitteleuropapolitik von Österreich und Italien im Revolutionsjahr 1989," in Michael Gehler and Maddalena Guiotto, eds., *Italy, Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany: A Triangle Relationship: Mutual Relations and Perceptions from 1945/49 to the Present* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2012), 455–67, 459.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Gehler, "Paving Austria's Way to Brussels: Chancellor Franz Vranitzky (1986–1997): A Banker, Social Democrat and Pragmatic European Leader," in *Journal of European Integration History* 18, no. 2 (2012): 159–82, 165–70.

<sup>11</sup> Communication from Erhard Busek to the author, 26 October 2007; see also Esther Schollum, "Die Europäische Demokratische Union (EDU) und der Demokratisierungsprozeß in Ost-, Mittel- und Südosteuropa," in *Österreichisches Jahrbuch für Politik* (1991): 491–523, 491–93.

a significant role in its positive outcome. For Warsaw, the CSCE process was one of its “most important foreign policy issues.” Poland was “very interested” in having a good relationship with Austria “at all levels.”<sup>12</sup> The extent of the Polish debt constituted the country’s largest economic and political problem. In order to have time for internal consolidation, several years of leniency were requested. Agreements for long-term debt repayment were seen as a viable option. Poland sought a bilateral connection to the EC, as had Hungary. From the Polish perspective, the “friendly voice of Austria” could “help a lot.” Olechowski assured Mock that the leader of the military government of Poland, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, was undertaking the “greatest possible efforts” to “integrate, in the internal transformations,” not only the important Catholic Church, but also the trade union movement Solidarity and its leader Lech Wałęsa. Poland was searching for a pluralistic means of operation for both the unions and public life. After Poland, Hungary and the USSR, it was only a matter of time for transformations to take place in the other socialist countries in Europe, Olechowski argued. Mock considered the political transformations in Eastern Europe “very significant.” He recommended “striking the right balance,” and referred to the negotiations that had begun concerning the reduction of conventional armed forces in Europe (CFE). He also asked the Polish authorities to speed up renovations on the Austrian Cultural Institute in Warsaw.<sup>13</sup>

## *2. Hungary and its border with Austria*

Vranitzky met the new Hungarian prime minister Miklós Németh for the first time on 13 February 1989. As part of delegation meetings, the two men met privately at the Hungarian Nagycenk Palace as well as in the town of Rust on Austrian territory to discuss their bilateral relations and respective economic and political positions. Németh spoke of a “second reform era” in Hungary, a process that had begun in 1986 when it was recognized that economic reforms were no longer feasible within the old political structures.<sup>14</sup> For this reason, since May 1988 the aim had been to accelerate the separation of party and state, to establish

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<sup>12</sup> Amtsvermerk “Beziehungen Österreich-Polen; Gespräch HVK-AM Olechowski am Rande des Wiener KSZE-Abschlusstreffens, 17 January 1989,” 23 January 1989, in Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten (BMEIA), GZl. 750.04/46-II.3/89. After applying for special permission, I was allowed early access to diplomatic records at the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the events in Central and Eastern Europe 1985–91. A volume of documents and a monograph are forthcoming. I would like to thank Ambassadors Fritz Bauer and Franz Wunderbaldinger, as well as Ministerialrat Gottfried Loibl for their support in this project.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Resuméprotokoll, Sucharipa m. p., “Österreich-Ungarn; Grenztreffen HBK-MP Nemeth (13 February 1989),” 14 February 1989, in BMEIA, GZ. 222.18.22/12-II.3/89.

democracy and the rule of law, to form an “entirely new political system,” and to rapidly create the conditions for a market economy to develop by means of laws regarding banking, tax reforms and corporate bodies. According to Németh, both the population and the party had become divided into two camps due to the question of which direction to move: toward establishing a multiparty system or pluralism in the context of a single-party system. As part of the Central Committee meeting of 10–11 February 1989, the party had taken the initiative to create a multi-party system within the socialist context, so that various parties could compete with different agendas. The seeds for new parties existed, and it was expected that some would actually be established in the coming year. With regard to the issue of how the events of 1956 should be defined, the Central Committee had reached a compromise. While the events had had the character of a popular uprising, towards the end, they were declared to be similar to a counter-revolution. According to Németh, this “verdict decision” had been taken to prevent the party from being torn apart and to avoid the need for punishing particular individuals. It was hoped that the party and the people would see the events in the same way. Németh gave Vranitzky the impression that Hungary was “aware” of its great responsibility as the pioneer of political reform in the socialist world. Indeed, in Hungary political competition was emerging for which no one was prepared. Thus the Central Committee was planning for the needed transition period. It was likely that a coalition government would form in Hungary. Németh raised the issue of work permits for Hungarian workers in Austria, and Vranitzky replied by assuring him that solutions would be found. Despite critical voices, Németh said that his government supported holding a joint world exhibition together with Austria. Combined planning and implementation of joint ventures in the auto and rail industries, as well as joint efforts in securing (external) funding were considered essential. In private conversations, in some cases also in the presence of Johann Sipötz, the governor of Austria’s easternmost province Burgenland, and his deputy, Franz Sauerzopf, it was agreed to construct new border and railway crossings at Pamhagen and Fertörakos/Mörbisch. It was also decided that the possibility of creating a duty-free zone in Sopron should be examined, a proposal that was to be made more concrete at the next meeting. Vranitzky declared his firm intention of maintaining Austria’s neutrality if it were to become a member of the EC. Notwithstanding Austria’s efforts in this direction, its “excellent relations with Hungary would not be neglected.” Németh announced that the physical barriers at the border would be completely dismantled by 1991. The increasing organizational and technical cooperation between the two countries would also involve new obligations.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. Cf. Maximilian Graf, “Die Welt blickt auf das Burgenland 1989 - Die Grenze wird zum Abbild der Veränderung,” in Maximilian Graf, Alexander Lass and Karlo Ruzicic-Kessler, eds., *Das Burgenland als internationale Grenzregion im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Neue Welt, 2012), 135–79.

In March Hungary joined the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, entering into force on 12 June. The dismantling of the Hungarian border barricades had already begun on 2 May 1989.<sup>16</sup> The “cutting” of the Iron Curtain by Alois Mock and Gyula Horn on 27 June actually only involved last remnants of the barbed wire fences as most of them had already been removed, and so in fact the whole action was staged for the media. Nonetheless, the television images of the events that were broadcast subsequently stimulated the largest exodus of GDR citizens since the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

At a breakfast meeting the previous day, the two foreign ministers had discussed European integration and Hungary’s participation. Horn thought that integration had come about for “objective reasons.”<sup>17</sup> He was worried about the possibility of being isolated from the EC. Hungary sought an agreement on preferential tariffs with the EC like the one held by Yugoslavia and hoped, in due course, to have a “true free trade agreement.” Before this could happen, the Hungarian economic system had to be liberalized and the forint had to be made convertible. At the same time, Hungary desired an intensification of its cooperation with EFTA, whereby it imagined a joint declaration like the one that had been concluded by EFTA with Yugoslavia. Horn suggested to Mock that a special EFTA fund for Hungary be created to the order of 80 to 100 million dollars. While this would not repair the Hungarian economy, it would give many companies new momentum. With regard to the Council of Europe, Hungary indicated that it was satisfied with having come closer and was “not impatient” for full membership. Mock agreed to support Hungary’s rapprochement with EFTA politically. He raised the question of whether a large fund for all reform-minded Eastern European states could be created. Horn stressed that in principle Hungary saw Austria’s anticipated membership in the EC in a positive light. Hungary’s concern lay with preserving the special quality of its bilateral relations with Austria. Mock pointed out that Austria’s European policy rested on two pillars: its participation in West European integration (EU, EFTA, and the Council of Europe) and its neighborhood policy. With regard to the current state of the EC and its foreseeable development, he saw no reason for Hungarian concern. Horn made it clear that prospects for an agreement being passed on the disarmament issue had never been more positive, “but the devil is in the detail.” As an example, he mentioned problems about the air forces (“not everything can be solved in one go”). In any event, a new political impetus was needed. This could be accomplished by a joint

<sup>16</sup> Andreas Oplatka, *Der erste Riss in der Mauer. September 1989—Ungarn öffnet die Grenze* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay, 2009), 87–104; 154–99. Cf. John Lewis Gaddis, *Der Kalte Krieg. Eine neue Geschichte* (Munich: Siedler, 2007), 302–3; Bernd Stöver, *Der Kalte Krieg. Geschichte eines radikalen Zeitalters 1947–1991* (Munich: Beck, 2007), 443; Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel. Die Revolution von 1989 in der DDR* (Munich: Beck, 2009), 346.

<sup>17</sup> Amtsvermerk Schmid m. p., “Off. Besuch von AM Horn; Gespräche mit HBM, 26 June 1989; Internationale Themen,” 28 June 1989, in BMEIA, GZ. 222.18.23/25-II.SL/89.

declaration being made at the higher levels of government, best that autumn. Mock agreed and repeated Shevardnadze's proposal for holding a meeting of heads of state. He explained the useful role of the "neutral and nonaligned (N + N) states," which were currently practicing restraint. Despite difficulties of internal consensus, they were always available as mediators in crisis situations. Horn did not wish to dramatize the fact that there had been a lack of agreement concerning a final document at the CSCE Paris meeting. The principle of consensus should not be abandoned, despite the fact that it also had disadvantages, such as allowing one or two countries to prevent decisions from being made (a reference to Romania made by the Hungarian foreign minister). Horn pointed to the major importance of the 13 June 1989 joint statement of the Federal Republic of Germany and the USSR, which confirmed the right of self-determination for all peoples,<sup>18</sup> including the Germans. Mock underlined the "leap forward" that had been accomplished by the Vienna CSCE Final Document. This meant that it had been predictable that little more than the "human dimension" could have been achieved at the Paris meeting. It was probable that in Copenhagen there would also be no major progress, this being reserved by the Soviet Union for the Moscow meeting in 1991. Horn described the Warsaw Pact as being in a process of defining itself. It was not collapsing, despite tendencies to that effect. The reform-minded members were dependent on one another and had to strengthen their cooperation. The political objectives of the Pact had to be identified. Hungary was seeking modernization, not disintegration. In the future, the pact would have to coordinate its defense policy, whereby an extensive restructuring would also have to include a change in the balance between cooperative and national military forces, to define a basic approach toward international issues, and should also safeguard the sovereignty of member states in domestic affairs, bilateral issues, as well as national interests with regard to third countries and matters of integration. It was planned to discuss these issues at the Warsaw Pact meeting to be held in Bucharest in early July. While the pact had never been a monolithic alliance, now any impressions of the like were also disappearing. The internal situation of individual countries (for example, Romania) was inconsistent with the general easing of pressure. The restructuring efforts at the national level were leading to

<sup>18</sup> Information Sucharipa "BRD-Sowjetunion; Gemeinsame Erklärung," 15 June 1989, in BMEIA, GZ. 225.01.01/17-II.3/89. See also "Achtung des Selbstbestimmungsrechts der Völker," in *Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der deutschen Bundesregierung*, no. 61, 15 June 1989, 542–44, 542; "Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers Kohl mit Generalsekretär Gorbatschow Bonn," 12 June 1989; "Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers Kohl mit Generalsekretär Gorbatschow Bonn," 13 June 1989; "Delegationsgespräch des Bundeskanzlers Kohl mit Generalsekretär Gorbatschow Bonn," 13 June 1989, in Hanns Jürgen Küsters and Daniel Hofmann, eds., *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik. Deutsche Einheit. Sonderedition aus den Akten des Bundeskanzleramtes 1989/90* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998), 276–99; and Andreas Hilger, ed., *Diplomatie für die deutsche Einheit. Dokumente des Auswärtigen Amtes zu den deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen 1989/90* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011).



tensions with those countries that did not accept pluralism. The problem was that “conservatives” were questioning the legitimacy of the new structures, as was happening between Czechoslovakia and Hungary.<sup>19</sup>

Mock outlined the basic Austrian position concerning the reform efforts:

- the respective states were to make sovereign decisions;
- Austria aimed to react in a differentiated manner: as far as possible, it was supporting the reforms in Poland, Hungary and the USSR, but where necessary, it was showing clear restraint, as for example with Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Romania;
- Austrian support should not cause any inconvenience, whereby Mock stated that he would be grateful for any suggestions;
- the opening of Eastern Europe would not lessen the role of Austria, but widen its possibilities;
- the budding developments would diminish the differences between the systems, reducing tensions and bringing peace and stability to Europe;
- Austria’s neutrality enabled it to make a competent contribution to the current events.

Due to the developments, it would become possible to leave the phase of “peaceful coexistence,” which might be followed by a period of “wider cooperation.” In the long term, this might lead to a third phase, that of a “Common European Home.”<sup>20</sup> Here, Mock was referring to the slogans of Khrushchev and Gorbachev, seeing them as a possibility for dynamic development.

The reactions of the Warsaw Pact countries to the crackdown on the democracy movement in China on 4 June 1989 and the reburial of Imre Nagy in Budapest were watched closely by the Austrians and aptly interpreted. There was “a striking disagreement among the statements,”<sup>21</sup> which on one hand documented the crumbling of the monolithic character of the Warsaw Pact, and on the other, the emergence of two camps.

Poland and Hungary expressed dismay at the events in China. The Foreign Policy Committee of the Hungarian Parliament expressed its deep alarm.<sup>22</sup> The Council of Ministers spoke of international responsibility in terms of human rights. The Polish dissident Adam Michnik argued that the events in Poland and China were an expression of the decline of political power. The Polish media considered Nagy’s interment to be the end of Stalinism in Hungary. The GDR, Romania and Czechoslovakia disapproved of the Nagy interment. No represen-

<sup>19</sup> Amtsvermerk Schmid m. p., “Off. Besuch von AM Horn; Gespräche mit HBM, 26 June 1989; Internationale Themen,” 28 June 1989, in BMEIA, GZ. 222.18.23/25-II.SL/89.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Sucharipa m. p., “Reaktionen der kommunistischen Staaten Europas auf das Nagy-Begräbnis,” 21 June 1989, in BMEIA, GZ. 222.03.00/36-II.3/89.

<sup>22</sup> Sucharipa m. p., “Reaktionen der WP-Staaten auf die Ereignisse in China und das Nagy-Begräbnis als Gradmesser für den Stand der eingetretenen Diversifizierung,” Vienna, 14 July 1989, in BMEIA, GZI. 33.03.00/172-II.3/89.

tative of the Romanian government took part in the funeral rites; the Hungarian ambassador in Bucharest was summoned before the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and handed a memorandum of protest. The general secretary of the Czechoslovak Central Committee Jan Fojtik criticized "certain circles in the West," which saw the Nagy interment as the symbolic burial of socialism in Hungary. The official East German news agency ADN opined that the celebration expressed the enmity between the Hungarian Communist Party and that of the Soviet Union. Led by the GDR, the response of these three states (GDR, CSSR, and Romania) and Bulgaria to the events in China was also unanimous, although the reaction of the CSSR was less severe. The army's intervention was declared as having been necessary in order to eliminate "errors" and "to fight a counter-revolutionary rebellion." In the GDR, the Church criticized the official position of the party and state with regard to the "Chinese solution." In Bulgaria, despite restraint with regard to Nagy's interment, the demonstrations in China were appraised as a "counter-revolutionary rebellion." The Soviet Union took a middle position in both cases; both liberal and orthodox opinions were expressed, whereby in the case of the Nagy interment, a remarkable effort at objectivity could be detected. The Congress of People's Deputies adopted a balanced resolution regarding the events in China, mentioning the use of troops and casualties, but also presenting the view that it was an internal matter and that no rash or hasty conclusions should be drawn. Other than a commentary in *Pravda*, which drew a comparison between the military deployment on Tiananmen Square and the fighting in Tbilisi and Fergana, what was published was only the official Chinese version, reproduced without comment. Gorbachev emphasized the need to find appropriate political solutions.<sup>23</sup>

The Pan-European Picnic, which was held on 19 August in the border region on Hungarian soil under the patronage of Otto von Habsburg together with Hungarian reform communists such as Imre Pozsgay, had the character of being a signal or a test, especially with regard to Gorbachev's reaction. But the picnic was not the decisive factor in Hungary's willingness to officially open the border, another event was much more critical: In the night of 21 to 22 August, the East German citizen Kurt-Werner Schulz was shot dead during a scuffle with a Hungarian border guard. A bullet is said to have been released from the officer's submachine gun. The incident took place on Austrian territory in the Lutzmannsburg district. After the Hungarian authorities notified Austria, a border commission was immediately convened to clarify the case. Mock expressed his regrets about the incident.<sup>24</sup> A few days later there was another fatality. After a successful escape to the West, a forty-year-old East German died of a heart attack. The transfer of the body was undertaken by the German Red Cross. The autopsy revealed that the man had been healthy, but had died of exhaustion. He had endured

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> APA Report 0263 5 AI, 22 August 1989.

five days without food in a Budapest church so that he could meet his West German fiancée.<sup>25</sup> Many years later, Németh acknowledged in a television interview that these fatal incidents, especially the death of the GDR citizen Schulz, were the crucial events that triggered Hungary's explicit willingness to open the border. Németh's closest advisors had brought it to his attention that because of the "aggressive" behavior of the East German refugees, he would have to bear the responsibility for more incidents and fatalities.<sup>26</sup> But while an internal decision had been made, it had, of course, not been settled at the highest levels between Budapest, Bonn and Vienna.

The East German refugees crept through corn fields, waded through swamps, swam across Lake Neusiedl, crawled over fields and used any hiding place they could find at the Hungarian-Austrian border. They left their cars, "Trabis" and even more valuable Wartburgs, back in Hungary. According to the West German ambassador in Vienna, Count Dietrich Brühl, "the hour of Burgenland," Austria's easternmost province, had struck. Without the Burgenlanders' "inestimable help for the Germans from the GDR," the exodus would never have grown to the extent it did before the border was opened. This help ranged from assistance during the escape and first aid in the homes along the border, to providing information about where buses to the embassy stood or families letting exhausted refugees stay with them for longer periods of time. Mayors of the smallest villages at the Hungarian border opened aid facilities in gymnasiums and similar buildings.<sup>27</sup>

Medical care and ointments were needed for sunburns and babies suffering from innumerable mosquito bites. Donations were ready: from toys, diapers, clothes, food and medicine, to body care products, including shower gel, unknown in the GDR. The rooms of the German embassy were crowded with people. There were not enough rooms in simple hotels. The mayor of Vienna, Helmut Zilk, provided rooms in hostels. The Austrian Red Cross, the Maltese Order relief agency, and several parishes in Vienna took in refugees and helped.<sup>28</sup>

By allowing the departure of refugees who had sought refuge in the West German embassy in Budapest, the Hungarian government infringed on the rules

<sup>25</sup> APA Report 0117 5 AI, 28 August 1989.

<sup>26</sup> ORF ZIB 2 Report, 19 August 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Report by former ambassador Dietrich Graf von Brühl, "Flucht in die Freiheit. Die Flüchtlingsbewegung aus Ungarn im Jahre 1989," 3 with an accompanying letter to the author dated 20 November 2005. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador von Brühl (†) for the permission to use this report, as well as for the many conversations we had. See also Dietrich Graf von Brühl, "Deutsche Erfahrungen mit Österreich," in Michael Gehler and Ingrid Böhler, eds., *Verschiedene europäische Wege im Vergleich: Österreich und die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945/49 bis zur Gegenwart. Festschrift für Rolf Steininger zum 65. Geburtstag* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2007), 579–84; Jens Schöne, *The Peaceful Revolution. Berlin 1989/90 - The Path to German Unity* (Berlin: Story Verlag, 2009), 53–69, 54–61; Interview with Countess Maria Octavia von Brühl, 26 February 2013 in Vienna; Graf, Lass, Ruzicic-Kessler, *Das Burgenland*.

<sup>28</sup> Brühl, "Flucht in die Freiheit," 4.

of the Warsaw Pact. For the first time, East German citizens were allowed to leave Hungary to West Germany without permission of the GDR government. Until then, they had always been forced to return to their hometowns in the GDR, where at best they were released to the Federal Republic in the West after paying a large bribe to the government. The unimpeded group exodus of refugees from the embassy was new.<sup>29</sup>

A comprehensive solution for the refugees living in camps, however, required high-level talks. On Friday, 25 August, one day after the arrival of the refugees from the Budapest embassy in Austria, Németh and Horn met at Gymnich Castle near Bonn for secret talks with Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher.<sup>30</sup> When discussing the East German citizens in Hungary seeking to escape to the West, Németh stated that deportation of the refugees back to East Germany was out of the question, and added: “We are opening the border. If there is no military or political power from outside that forces us to act differently, we will keep the border open for East Germans.” The departure of the refugees was to take place until mid-September 1989.<sup>31</sup>

On 21 August, Genscher had already declared in an interview that no one in the GDR was being encouraged to leave the home. But anyone who did come had to be helped. In the same breath, he confided that he had turned to his “best people” to ensure that there would be help. He mentioned the former government spokesperson and foreign secretary Jürgen Sudhoff, his highest officials, and his former chief of cabinet Michael Jansen. To organize help, Sudhoff went to Budapest several times, and Jansen to Budapest and Vienna. Jansen was the main person responsible for organizing aid in Austria. He saw to it that Ambassador Brühl, who as a precaution had left “on vacation” to Tyrol, was brought back to duty. Brühl returned to Vienna the same day. On 25 August, Jansen was in Vienna to get a transit “green light” from Mock. Austrian approval was granted immediately. Between 28 August and 10 September, important details were clarified with the head of the Foreign Ministry’s consular section, Ambassador Erik Nettel,

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>30</sup> On this conversation, see Genscher’s memorandum, 25 August 1989, in Küsters and Hofmann, eds., *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik: Deutsche Einheit*, 377–80. The memorandum, however, contains no mention of the opening of the Hungarian border to East German refugees, but only recounts the difficult economic situation in Hungary, as had been reported by Prime Minister Németh; although he does not mention Austria’s and Mock’s role when opening the Austro-Hungarian boarder, see also Andreas Rödder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland. Die Geschichte der Wiedervereinigung* (Munich: Beck, 2009), 72–75; Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Helmut Kohl. Eine politische Biographie* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2012), 526. In contrast to Rödder and Schwarz, see Grosser, 1989. *L’année où le monde a basculé*, 44–45; Kowalczyk, *Endspiel*, 350–51, 377.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. At the end of the statement was a hidden message to the refugees. See also, Helmut Kohl, *Erinnerungen 1982–1990* (Munich: Droemer, 2005), 921–23; concerning Bonn’s instrumentalization of the GDR refugee problem and the intensified reform process in Central Europe, see Janusz Sawczuk, *Turbulentes 1989. Genese der deutschen Einheit* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 174–206.

and his deputy, Erich Kussbach, and an agreement was reached. Brühl recalls: "It was a pleasant conversation. The goal was clear. The road had to be paved. But it was not as easy as it sounds today. For example, a treaty with the German Democratic Republic obligated Austria to allow entry to persons arriving from East Germany only if they had a visa."<sup>32</sup> The main problem was how to organize the transit journey. The Austrian government maintained the decision it had already made with regard to the embassy refugees from Budapest: The Austrian Red Cross was commissioned with the task to make it clear that the activities were providing humanitarian aid. Using private buses and not the state railways (ÖBB) was practical for preserving neutrality. A combination of train-bus or even only trains was ruled out since the big camps in Hungary were not near railway stations. In addition, the number of refugees was too large. Reloading so many refugees twice was not feasible. The bulk of the refugees were therefore to be transported by bus to the German border via three major routes, along which the Red Cross had set up aid and support stations. The border crossings to Germany were Passau and Freilassing.<sup>33</sup>

Each Trabbi driver who could identify him- or herself as a citizen of the GDR at the Austro-Hungarian border was given 700 Austrian shillings by Red Cross workers at the aid stations, enough to buy the gasoline needed to reach the German border. The Red Cross also prepared maps that showed the routes through Austria. The problem of the Austria-GDR visa agreement was regulated with a flexible "Austrian solution" by the government in Vienna: a loose piece of paper with a visa stamp was inserted into the identification papers of each East German refugee. Only the refugee's name was recorded, whereupon entry was authorized. The insert was then removed at the German border. This satisfied the visa agreement. Bonn had relayed the message to the West German embassy in Vienna that "money does not matter." The expenses incurred by the Red Cross were refunded.<sup>34</sup>

On 10–11 September, the border was opened for free crossing. Kohl had been made aware of this date by 4 September, as a result of an agreement between his advisor Horst Teltschik and the Hungarian prime minister. Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher was in the loop as of 7 September at the latest, after Horn had informed employees of the German Foreign Ministry in Budapest. Bonn had provided substantial financial guarantees, thus making Hungary more inclined to follow through. On 12 September, the paralyzed SED Politburo belatedly discussed countermeasures in East Berlin that had been hectically developed by the

<sup>32</sup> Brühl, "Flucht in die Freiheit," 7.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 8; Michael Jansen, "Vielleicht sah Genscher mit der Deutschen Einheit seine Mission nach achtzehn Jahren als Außenminister als erfüllt an," in Michael Gehler and Hinnerk Meyer, eds., *Deutschland, der Westen und der europäische Parlamentarismus. Hildesheimer Europagespräche I* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2012), 148–72, 169–70.

<sup>34</sup> Brühl, "Flucht in die Freiheit," 9.

Stasi, but it had neither political arguments nor concrete means of exerting pressure with respect to Budapest. The idea of recalling the ambassador was dropped. Initially, not even a decision to increase controls on GDR tourists going to Hungary was made. In a protest note, East Berlin demanded that Budapest immediately reverse the opening of the border, which was promptly rejected. Hungary referred to article 62 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, the *clausula rebus sic stantibus* (the fundamental change of circumstances).<sup>35</sup>

During these days and weeks, the USSR remained neutral in the bilateral conflict between East Berlin and Budapest, while the triangle of Bonn-Vienna-Budapest coordinated with each other and organized the transfer of thousands of East Germans to the West, thus driving another wedge into the uncertain states of the Eastern bloc. Standing opposed to the reform-oriented Poles and Hungarians was the communist-orthodox triangle of East Berlin-Prague-Bucharest.

In the period from 10 July to 13 November, the German embassy in Vienna directly furnished about 15,000 refugees with money, tickets and identity cards. In addition, from 11 September, at least 5,000 people were provided 700 Austrian schillings for gasoline by the Red Cross. More than 20,000 refugees crossed Austria to Germany in Red Cross buses or drove from Hungary, so that the wave of refugees who were counted numbered some 40,000 people. This does not include the many who were brought by West German tourists from Hungary, or were picked up directly at the Austro-Hungarian border by West German relatives. Thus, a total of up to 50,000 refugees chose to travel to West Germany through Austria in the summer and fall of 1989. The costs to the German embassy in the fiscal year 1989, including daily allowances, in some cases hotel rooms, tickets, the expenses for buses and general care, were around 3.8 million DM. The Red Cross was refunded around 1.5 million DM, and thus the total was about 5.2 million DM.<sup>36</sup> The German-Austrian-Hungarian cooperation, which, whether unwittingly or consciously, further aggravated the erosion of the SED regime, was thus not particularly expensive.

For both sides, policy concerning the media was a balancing act from the beginning. On one hand, as Brühl has emphasized, “Without the photo of the two foreign ministers cutting the barbed wire, which went around the world, and the reaction of the East Germans who were willing to flee, the rapid collapse of socialism in its communist form [would have been] unthinkable.” The media’s “daily drumming,”

<sup>35</sup> On the backgrounds and developments see Oplatka, *Der erste Riss in der Mauer*, 170–230. No reference to these forms of German-Austrian-Hungarian cooperation during the summer of 1989 is made in Ines Lehmann, *Die Außenpolitik der DDR 1989/90. Eine dokumentierte Rekonstruktion* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2011). On Kohl’s foreign and European policy, see Günter Buchstab and Hans-Otto Kleinmann, eds., *Helmut Kohl. Berichte zur Lage 1989–1998. Der Kanzler und Parteivorsitzende im Bundesvorstand der CDU Deutschlands* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2012), XXXII–XXXVI, XL–XLIII, 12–14, 38–39 as well as the documents: 9 October 1989, 11–17; 6 November 1989, 36; 15 November 1989, 37–39, 43–48, 27 November 1989, 52–59; 15 January 1990, 71–75; 11 June 1990, 145–50.

<sup>36</sup> Brühl, “Flucht in die Freiheit,” 10–11.

its reports on the growing numbers of people eager to flee, fed the public pressure on politicians to help. Without the influence of the media, the events of the summer of 1989 would have been unimaginable. But information about the refugees still had to be muted. If a refugee appeared in front of a television camera, this could trigger retaliations against relatives who still lived in the GDR. For Brühl it is clear:

If the information about the death strip being eradicated had not spread so quickly, especially the extremely popular image of the two foreign ministers cutting the barbed wire fence on 27 June 1989, the movement of refugees probably would not have been so rapid.<sup>37</sup>

Bonn praised Vienna, and Austria's policy received gratitude and approval. Kohl personally thanked the citizens of Burgenland. The Austrian Federal Chancellery on Ballhausplatz registered the West German reaction: it was "admonishing stubborn patience," it continued to talk about the integration of the West and its active participation in the European unification process, and it held "relieved gratitude" for confidence statements from its allies such as US president Bush.<sup>38</sup>

The position of the United States from the view of the diplomatic reports and evaluations of the political situation by the Austrian Foreign Ministry Foreign Ministry shows that what was involved was essentially the continuation and safeguarding of the Western security policy, the guarantee of the peaceful reform process in Central and Eastern Europe, and the support of the policies of Mikhail Gorbachev. In spite of different positions (Henry Kissinger doubted the continuous logical development of the line pushed by Gorbachev from Lenin's Decree on Peace to the idea of a "Common European Home"), one thing was totally clear for Washington: the CSCE process was to be strengthened and the human rights situation in Central and Eastern Europe was to improve. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) of 1987 was adopted, becoming a foreign policy success of US president Ronald Reagan. Austria's geopolitical situation was viewed by US military and security strategists as a weak point (literally a "nightmare") for the defense of Western Europe.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, US deputy secretary of state Lawrence Eagleburger assessed Austria's knowledge of and experience with Central and Eastern Europe for the State Department as "valuable." On the other hand, he evaluated proposals for the neutralization of Germany (such as in the Modrow Plan of 1990) to be "very dangerous."<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 11–12, quote here 12; see also Horst Teltschik, *329 Tage. Innenansichten der Einigung* (Berlin: Siedler, 1991), 39

<sup>38</sup> Report Loibl, Austrian embassy Bonn, to Austrian MFA, "BRD; Regierungserklärung des Bundeskanzlers zur Lage der Nation im geteilten Deutschland, 8 November 1989," 10 November 1989, in Archive of the Austrian embassy Bonn Zl. 21.56.02/2-A/89.

<sup>39</sup> Report Plattner, "Einige Aspekte der Sicherheitspolitik des Westens (Lage zu Jahresbeginn 1988)," 2 February 1988, in BMEIA, GZ. 703/1-II.1/88.

<sup>40</sup> Quotation from Information Vukovich, "Österreichisch-amerikanische KSZE-Konsultationen Washington, 2 February 1990," 7 February 1990, in BMEIA, GZ. 807.30/39-II.7/90; also in this respect: Aktenvermerk Prohaska, "Besuch des stv. amerikanischen AM Eagleburger in Wien

Austria itself welcomed the rapprochement between the superpowers (with regard to the disarmament of conventional weapons systems and the elimination of nuclear weapons) and also wished to see these measures extended to cultural and economic areas. Against the background of the new reduction of tensions, Vienna wanted to present its function as a bridge between East and West through its neutrality, which for the most part still remained untouched.

### 3. *The events in the GDR*

The virulence of the German question and the rapidly implemented German unification did not come as a surprise only for Austrian diplomats and politicians, but also for the public. At the beginning of September 1989, Austria's ambassadors in East Berlin, Franz Wunderbaldinger, and in Bonn, Friedrich Bauer, were "unanimously convinced that talk about [reunification] was not to be taken seriously."<sup>41</sup> According to Bauer, "No one who was politically accountable" would seek such a thing. "Almost everyone would accept the two countries side by side. The maximum goal of a 'Germany policy,' supported by almost all political parties, would only be to increase the existing contacts between the two states at all levels." Wunderbaldinger made it clear "that in the GDR, too, there is no great pressure to make radical changes. It is not expected that there will be a sudden upsurge and change of direction. Because, on the whole, the state is functioning, it is also accepted by the population."<sup>42</sup>

Ambassador Thomas Nowotny, who sat in the home office, was doubtful about all this: "There is evidence of a fundamental change in the political climate of the two German states." He was referring to a debate between historians in the Federal Republic, in which "Germany's war guilt" had been "put into perspective," and to the issue of the Polish-German border. "East German nationalism" probably did not exist; at best, there was a feeling of certain local ties. The population had grown accustomed to certain convenient things such as job security and cheap basic food and housing, but these were not enough to create an identity. In the future, reunification was very much on the political agenda of both German states, and the Western European countries could not formally object to it. "Of course nobody" outside Germany actually wanted the two Germanys to "reunify" by applying their right to self-determination, a principle recognized

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(23. bis 25.2.) Besuch bei HBM, Round Table-Gespräch; AV," 5 March 1990, in BMEIA, GZ. 224.18.13./2-II.9/90.

<sup>41</sup> The following quotes are from the report of Ambassador Nowotny, "Das Gespenst der deutschen Wiedervereinigung," 19 September 1989, in the Archives of the former Austrian embassy Bonn, GZ. 22.17.01/4-II.6/89. A copy is in the possession of the author. See also Michael Gehler, "Österreich, die DDR und die Einheit Deutschlands 1989/90," in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 57, no. 5 (2009): 427–52.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



internationally by all countries, “but this fear is not articulated in so many words. One is very aware that an open stand against reunification would only strengthen the extreme nationalist forces in the Federal Republic. In this question there is no open political dialogue with the FRG—only mute, unacknowledged fear.” Nowotny left no doubt about what he described as an eerie scenario: “For the [current] structures, reunification would certainly be a huge shock.” According to his sophisticated analysis, however, in the event that reunification was realized, it would not be very dramatic and even less harmful: Not only was the population growth in the Federal Republic low or even negative, economically it was “much less dynamic than either it itself or other European countries commonly believe.” One had to start from the premise that if the present-day East Germany were to be reunified, it could not be brought to the economic level of the Federal Republic immediately. For a number of reasons, Nowotny did not consider German neutrality to be a mandatory prerequisite or result of the German states merging: He cited a statement that Khrushchev had made to Kreisky in an earlier decade, whereby neutrality was an appropriate status for smaller states, but inapplicable for those that held a significant role in international relations due to their own weight. Nowotny continued: Neutralization of the current Federal Republic would weaken the Western defense alliance to the degree that it would become “insubstantial.” Under its European policy, France was aiming at strengthening the Federal Republic’s Western ties so that they would be “de facto indissoluble.” Nowotny considered it more likely that the result would be an (enlarged) Federal Republic that was part of the Western defense alliance, rather than a reunified Germany that was neutral, whereby this would involve a military shift that was apparently detrimental to the East. This, however, would be “less extensive” than one might initially expect. The Austrian diplomat summed this up in a realistic and far-sighted manner:

Despite lip-service to “self-determination,” no European state today desires German “reunification.” However, the fear of such a reunification could become a very destabilizing element in European politics, despite the fact that it cannot prevent reunification. Whether this reunification actually occurs is, of course, uncertain. But whatever happens, it cannot be ruled out. In any case, developments have occurred in both German states that make such a reunification more likely today than it was two or three years ago. A reunified Germany cannot and should not be neutral or neutralized. But if at least [sic!] the western part of the reunified Germany were to continue to be part of NATO, and the entire state of Germany remain integrated [into] the EC, then the generally feared threat of a newly formed military and economically dominant super-power would not arise.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. Nowotny was obviously responding to the idea of neutralizing Eastern Europe, which had been reintroduced and circulating in the US media; see Irving Kristol, “Why not Neutralize Eastern Europe?,” in *International Herald Tribune*, 13 September 1989. See also Christiane Lemke, *Die Ursachen des Umbruchs 1989. Politische Sozialisation in der ehemaligen DDR* (Darmstadt: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991), 276–78; Karl-Rudolf Korte, *Deutschlandpolitik in Helmut Kohls Kanzlerschaft. Regierungsstil und Entscheidungen 1982–1989*, *Geschichte der Deutschen Einheit* 1 (Stuttgart: DVA, 1998), 479–83; Werner Weidenfeld, Peter M. Wagner and

For Austrian diplomacy and politics, the fall of the Berlin Wall came as a complete surprise. In the first weeks and months after 9 November, German reunification was not expected. It was a taboo subject. The enthusiasm and joy about the unexpected events in the East were held in check at Ballhausplatz.<sup>44</sup> Bauer has summarized the attitude in Vienna as follows: “We did not campaign against reunification, nor did we specifically welcome it at a certain point in time.”<sup>45</sup>

For this reason, in October and November 1989, the Austrian government adopted a wait-and-see attitude that subsequently leaned clearly toward the status quo. Its approach was mainly that of politically correct neutrality. Vranitzky tried to be generous regarding the process of reforms in the GDR, but at the same time also to contribute to the normalization and stabilization of the East German transitional regime, and thus of the existing state of affairs. In the financial sphere, ties were to become closer, and the policy of economic bilateralism that had already been followed until then was to be intensified. On 24 November 1989, Vranitzky was the first Western state guest to visit the new East German head of government, Hans Modrow. During the visit, Austria’s chancellor also paid his respects to the GDR opposition and met the governing mayor of Berlin, Walter Momper.<sup>46</sup>

In his Ten-Point Plan of 28 November, German chancellor Kohl then suggested a confederation of the two German states.<sup>47</sup> He had to suppress his annoyance concerning the “East-West Fund” that had been initiated by Vranitzky and the Austrian minister of finance Ferdinand Lacina. The five billion shillings (about 710 million DM) that Austria had introduced into the discussion that week needn’t have worried Bonn, because it was also planned to use the money for Poland, not only the GDR. But according to Bauer, Kohl was more fearful “that the Austrian proposal might become the nucleus of a larger Western European support action” for the GDR regime, especially since a European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) was in the making. Vranitzky had put in a bid for its seat to be in Vienna. In the end, London’s bid was accepted. Apparently, Modrow’s request for 15 billion DM in financial assistance during his visit in February 1990 to Bonn was gruffly rejected by Kohl. The goal of the Austrian initiative had been to effect a smooth transition from a planned economy to a market economy over the mid-term period, as well as being a means for stabilizing and improving Austrian market economic competitiveness.<sup>48</sup>

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Elke Bruck, *Außenpolitik für die deutsche Einheit. Die Entscheidungsjahre 1989/90*, Geschichte der Deutschen Einheit 4 (Stuttgart: DVA 1998), 300–45. On the German historians’ dispute, see Jürgen Elvert, “Erdmann-Debatte und Historikerstreit. Zwei Historikerkontroversen im Vergleich”, in Gehler and Böhler, *Verschiedene europäische Wege im Vergleich*, 454–67.

<sup>44</sup> This is the unanimous verdict of the two ambassadors Bauer and Wunderbaldinger, who were concurrently the representatives in East Berlin and Bonn. Interviews with the two ambassadors in Vienna, 4 May 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Ambassador Friedrich Bauer, 4 May 2007.

<sup>46</sup> Gehler, “Österreich, die DDR und die Einheit Deutschlands 1989/90,” 430–35.

<sup>47</sup> Weidenfeld, Wagner, Bruck, *Außenpolitik für die deutsche Einheit*, 97–110.

<sup>48</sup> Letter from Ambassador Friedrich Bauer to the author, July 2007.

On 26 January 1990, GDR prime minister Modrow, accompanied by foreign minister Oskar Fischer, the minister for foreign trade Gerhard Beil and tourism minister Bruno Benthien, stopped in Vienna during a visit to Austria. On this occasion it was decided to temporarily suspend visa requirements as of 1 February. Vranitzky pledged rapid support for the reforms in Eastern Europe. Austria would be ill advised to wait for the consolidation of democracy in the East, before deciding to help. When working together it was focusing on “specific projects” and “not spectacular conferences.” Negotiations were also held with Austrian transport minister Rudolf Streicher and minister of economy Wolfgang Schüssel.<sup>49</sup>

Only during the visit of the newly elected, non-communist East German prime minister Lothar de Maizière to Vienna on 25 July 1990 was the reunification of the two German states appraised by Vranitzky as being “an event of greatest political significance that embodies, like no other, the victory over the division of Europe, and, at the same time, that allows a viable peace settlement to replace the decade-long confrontation between the two blocs.”<sup>50</sup>

On 30 July 1990, Mock spoke at the International Diplomatic Seminar at Klessheim Palace near Salzburg on the topic “Central and Eastern Europe on the road to parliamentary democracy and a social market economy.” He stressed the importance of the transition, and honored the achievements of Gorbachev, without whom the changes in Central and Eastern Europe would not have been possible. Through his “new thinking” it had become possible for communism to change into a system of parliamentary democracy and market economy.<sup>51</sup>

In contrast to the Austrian Federal Chancellery, the early reaction of the Austrian Foreign Ministry to the events in Germany had been very positive. Mock supported, openly and straightforwardly, the program of Kohl, which amounted to an all-German solution as part of the Western alliance. Through the course of January 1990, the growing untenability of the political situation in the GDR had become visible, although Vranitzky still wanted to give the Modrow government a chance.<sup>52</sup>

In the end, Austria did not serve as a neutral model for a united Germany. It also distanced itself from becoming a mediator. On one hand, it did not want to put a

<sup>49</sup> Gehler, “Österreich, die DDR und die Einheit Deutschlands 1989/90,” 437–43.

<sup>50</sup> See the chronology of 25 July 1990, in *Österreichisches Jahrbuch für Internationale Politik* 1990 (1991): 146, as well as the Document 10, declaration of the Austrian chancellor Dr. Franz Vranitzky on the occasion of German unification on 3 October 1990, Vienna, in *Österreichische außenpolitische Dokumentation. Texte und Dokumente* (November 1990): 51–52.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 147; Aleksandr Galkin and Anatolij Tschernjajew, eds., *Michail Gorbatschow und die deutsche Frage. Sowjetische Dokumente 1986–1991* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011), xxxiii–xxxiv.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Gehler, “Eine Außenpolitik der Anpassung an veränderte Verhältnisse: Österreich und die Vereinigung Bundesrepublik Deutschland-DDR 1989/90,” in Michael Gehler and Ingrid Böhler, eds., *Verschiedene europäische Wege im Vergleich: Österreich und die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945/49 bis zur Gegenwart. Festschrift für Rolf Steininger zum 65. Geburtstag* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2007), 493–530, 506–11.

strain on its ambitions for joining the EU, and on the other hand, it was interested in the revision of certain clauses of the 1955 State Treaty, for which the Soviet Union's consent was still needed. In February–March 1990, the Austrian chancellor adapted his policies, especially in the wake of Modrow's recall from office by the first free parliamentary elections in the GDR on 18 March, to the changing circumstances and finally expressed his support for German reunification.<sup>53</sup>

Until then, Vranitzky had followed the line of François Mitterrand and Margaret Thatcher in the question of German unity, whereby the survival of the GDR was initially considered not only possible, but also desirable.<sup>54</sup> He then changed his course for lack of a better alternative, after realizing the futility of this idea given the GDR's massive debt.

In his speech to the Austrian National Assembly on 15 March 1990, Mock responded to the dramatic developments that had occurred in the recent months in the GDR. Since the beginning of the year, more than 100,000 East Germans had immigrated to West Germany. "The moment the apparatus of repression broke its stride and Soviet troops were no longer available as a control factor, the artificiality of the state structures in the GDR was revealed with a bang."<sup>55</sup> With regard to the unification of the two German states on the basis of their right to self-determination, in the minds and hearts of the people it seems to be "a matter that has already been decided." Mock continued: "For us, as members of the European international community, it is important that this process of reunification is based on democracy, that existing borders and treaties are respected, and that the results of the Helsinki Process are also considered." The reform processes in Poland and Hungary, which had started even before the revolutionary developments, had intensified in a peaceful manner, although this did not mean that all difficulties had been overcome. During a meeting with President Jaruzelski in Geneva, which took place on the periphery of the session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Mock reassured him that "Austria is prepared to support the reforms in Poland to the best of its abilities." Mock visited Hungary twice, where he gained the impression "that this country is already quite far along the road to parliamentary democracy and a social market economy."<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 512–15.

<sup>54</sup> Valérie Guérin-Sendelbach, *Frankreich und das vereinigte Deutschland. Interessen und Perzeptionen im Spannungsfeld* (Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 1999); Tilo Schabert, *Wie Weltgeschichte gemacht wird. Frankreich und die deutsche Einheit* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2002); Elke Bruck, *François Mitterrands Deutschlandbild—Perzeption und Politik im Spannungsfeld deutschland-, europa- und sicherheitspolitischer Entscheidungen 1989–1992* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003); Klaus-Rainer Jackisch, *Eisern gegen die Einheit: Margaret Thatcher und die deutsche Wiedervereinigung* (Frankfurt am Main: Societäts-Verlag, 2004); Ulrich Lapenküper, *Mitterrand und Deutschland. Die enträtselte Sphinx* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011).

<sup>55</sup> Speech by Alois Mock, "Der Wandel in Europa als Herausforderung für Österreich," 15 March 1990, Inzko m. p., Runderlass an alle österreichische Vertretungsbehörden, 16 March 1990, in BMEIA, Zl. 700.17.15/149-I.3/90.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

Austria was participating in aid operations and support measures. It was also playing a role in debit relief programs. The former communist dictatorships had debts in Austria of 190 billion shillings. In a televised press meeting on 25 November 1990, Mock agreed to several 100 million shillings of Austrian loans, with direct binding to other Austrian payments. In particular it was considered important to restructure the debt of Poland, which had “the most difficult situation.”<sup>57</sup>

#### *4. The changes in the CSSR*

The first official visit since 1981 of a Czechoslovak head of government to Austria took place on 24–25 October 1989. For Prime Minister Ladislav Adamec, this was also his first visit to the West. The long delay for this official visit to Austria made it evident that from the Austrian viewpoint, bilateral relations with Czechoslovakia were not as deep-rooted or close as those with Hungary. Adamec’s visit left the impression in Vienna that the government in Prague had decided on a policy of cautiously becoming more open and of pursuing matters that Austria considered important. A sign of this had already been seen by a number of humanitarian cases being resolved before the visit. This indicated Prague’s willingness to introduce a series of other measures that would make it easier for the citizens of both countries to cross the border. But one key Austrian request, a reduction in visa fees, did not appear on the list of measures proposed by Adamec. It seemed that the CSSR either could not or did not want to relinquish this source of foreign currency earnings, especially when tourism was increasing. When questioned later, the former Czechoslovak ambassador to Vienna Marek Venuta agreed that this had been the case. Environmental issues were presented as one of the Czechoslovak government’s biggest concerns. Vienna was expecting Czechoslovakia to build more nuclear power plants. Adamec repeated that Czechoslovakia was very interested in intensifying its economic relations with Austria. There were opportunities for this particularly in the area of environmental technology. According to Vienna’s appraisal of the situation, Prague was aware of its need for socio-political change, particularly in light of the incipient reform developments in the GDR and the possibility of an impending isolation, which sparked serious concern. But any attempts at other political forces gaining political participation were still rigidly tied to the communist party’s grasp on its governing role, and thus from the outset were severely limited. This was unequivocally expressed by Adamec during his Vienna visit: There would be “dialogue with ‘independent groups’ only if they do not place the existing system in ques-

<sup>57</sup> Transcript of the “Pressestunde” with Mock on 25 November 1990, Greinert, m. p., Runderlass an alle Österreichischen Berufsvertretungsbehörden und Kulturinstitute, 28 November 1990, in BMEIA, Zl. 800.55.07/55-I.3/90.

tion.”<sup>58</sup> In October 1989, the course had been set in Prague for a careful and yet perceptible intensification of Austro-Czechoslovak relations. But the CSCE human rights stipulations continued to be a limiting factor from Vienna’s point of view, while in Prague they were perceived by many communists as annoying.

A few weeks later, Mock concluded in retrospect that the developments in Czechoslovakia had been “less dramatic” than those in the GDR. Because of the sudden feeling of political isolation, the local leadership yielded “relatively rapidly to the pressure of the powerful demonstrations, especially after 17 November.”<sup>59</sup> The rigid functionaries heading the communist party were soon replaced by leaders ready for power-sharing. With the election of former dissident Václav Havel as president, “an unambiguous signal [was] set in the direction of democratization.” During Mock’s visits to Prague and Bratislava in March 1990, he was able to “perceive this change clearly.” Just as Mock had initiated the first stage of the CSCE human rights control mechanism when Havel had been arrested the previous year, Mock intervened on 25 October 1989 for the release of Jan Čarnogurský, who was imprisoned in Bratislava. A few weeks later Čarnogurský had become part of the government as the first deputy to the prime minister. Mock made it clear “that today at the top of the Czechoslovak state are people with whom we are closely connected because of our natural solidarity in difficult times.”<sup>60</sup>

### 5. *The changes in Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia*

Especially dramatic were the developments in Romania, which coincided with the Christmas holidays. Hundreds of people died in chaotic conditions during the struggle for freedom.<sup>61</sup> Vienna was informed about the continuing miserable supply situation and the violation of human rights. The government’s position could only be sustained by the security forces. Although a few individuals could be considered part of an opposition, their efforts were ineffective. The federal government in Vienna had applied the CSCE human dimension mechanism (levels 1 and 3) according to the Vienna follow-up meeting.<sup>62</sup> As stressed by Mock, Austria could also be proud “that it had the courage to call on the United Nations Security Council to deal with the situ-

<sup>58</sup> Record entry, Sucharipa m. p., “CSSR; offizieller Besuch Ministerpräsident Adamec”; Gesamteindruck,” 30 October 1989, in BMEIA, GZ. 35.18.09/36-II.3/89.

<sup>59</sup> Report Valentin Inzko, “‘Der Wandel in Europa als Herausforderung für Österreich,’ Rede des Herrn Bundesministers im Nationalrat, 15 March 1990,” 16 March 1990, in BMEIA, ZI. 700.17.15/149-I.3/90.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Anneli Ute Gabanyi, *Die unvollendete Revolution: Rumänien zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Piper, 1990), 82–131.

<sup>62</sup> Information, Sucharipa m. p., “Osteuropa; aktuelle Lagebeurteilung,” 8 June 1989, in BMEIA, GZ. 713/6-II.3/89.

ation in Romania.”<sup>63</sup> However, the Security Council was blocked by Chinese and Soviet vetoes. As soon as the tide had turned in Romania after the bloody overthrow of Nicolae Ceaușescu, Austria and its population distinguished themselves, as Mock notes, “through a huge wave of aid and solidarity that was internationally recognized.”

The reform efforts in Bulgaria were judged in Vienna as being “art for art’s sake.” At the first signs of pluralistic impulses, repressive forms could immediately be seen. Austria served as a transit country for Turkish-Islamic minorities.<sup>64</sup> While the developments in Bulgaria were still largely dominated by the communist party, although excesses toward the country’s Islamic ethnic minority had subsided (Sofia had initiated a brutal Bulgarization and assimilation policy against the Turkish population which led to a mass exodus), Mock let it be known that the developments in Yugoslavia gave “cause to a certain degree of concern.” Old nationalistic and ethnic divisions that were thought to have been overcome threatened to erupt again. The foreign minister, however, was swayed by the idea “that Yugoslavia is strong enough to cope with these problems politically and to solve them step by step in the course of the democratization process.”<sup>65</sup> He was mistaken. Hungary’s foreign minister Horn had informed the Ballhausplatz about “Hungary’s great concern” already in March 1989: “Milošević is pursuing a neo-Stalinist model that is even more dangerous when seen in a nationalist-Serbian framework. This can lead to unforeseeable consequences.”<sup>66</sup>

In the 1990s, Europe was to experience three new conflicts in the Balkans (in 1991–92, the federal government and army of Yugoslavia against Slovenia and Croatia who had declared independency; 1992–95, a civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina with Serbian and Croatian intervention; and in 1999, the Kosovo war between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians with NATO intervention). Until 1945 there had been four wars in the Balkans (in 1912, 1913, 1914–18, and 1941–45), and thus in the twentieth century the area saw a total of seven wars.

### III. The Warsaw Pact in transition and other trends in Central and Eastern Europe

In Austria’s assessment (based on Yugoslav and Hungarian sources), the meeting of the Warsaw Pact countries in Bucharest on 7 and 8 July 1989<sup>67</sup> was marked

<sup>63</sup> Speech Mock, “Der Wandel in Europa als Herausforderung für Österreich,” 15 March 1990.

<sup>64</sup> Information, Sucharipa m. p., “Osteuropa; aktuelle Lagebeurteilung,” 8 June 1989, in BMEIA, GZ. 713/6-II.3/89.

<sup>65</sup> Speech Mock, “Der Wandel in Europa als Herausforderung für Österreich,” 15 March 1990.

<sup>66</sup> Record entry, Sucharipa m. p., “Entwicklungen in Osteuropa; Gespräch des HGS mit Staatssekretär Horn,” 20 March 1989, in BMEIA, GZ. 502.16.03/19-II.3/89.

<sup>67</sup> Records of the Political Consultative Committee Meeting in Bucharest, 7–8 July 1989, in Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne, eds., *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact 1955–1991* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2005), 644–54.

by a “new atmosphere” that allowed “genuine consultations” of the type held between equals. The Pact was in the process of evolving into something similar to a political alliance. The Hungarian foreign minister considered three aspects worth mentioning: There was no resistance to Gorbachev’s disarmament proposals, or even misgivings. Perestroika was deliberate and the Brezhnev Doctrine had been “suspended.” And a clear division had emerged between the socialist states with regard to their willingness to reform: On one side were the “hardliners,” to which Horn counted not only the GDR and Romania, but also Bulgaria, to the surprise of Vienna. The progressive states were considered the USSR, Hungary and Poland. The CSSR’s low-key stance did not allow an opinion to be formed. According to information provided by Yugoslavia, bilateral issues were discussed in Bucharest, but not within the framework of the Pact’s conference, but at a concomitant meeting of the party leaders. Ceausescu made serious reproaches against Hungary, but was “held back” by other party leaders. Todor Zhivkov requested support in Bulgaria’s conflict with Turkey, but it was pointed out to him that he could hardly expect support from his partners now, after having neither informed nor consulted them with regard to his unilateral handling of his country’s dispute with Ankara (due to the repressive measures Bulgaria had taken against its Turkish minority).<sup>68</sup>

In December 1989, Vienna considered the general trends in Central and Eastern Europe to be the following: Most of the Warsaw Pact countries were pursuing courses of reform from which “positive regeneration effects” would develop. Pragmatically, shifts were occurring in the limits Moscow regarded tolerable in the satellite states’ transformation processes. Membership in the Pact was “still a *conditio sine qua non*.” The northern states in the Pact’s territory (Poland and the GDR) had a different strategic importance than the southern area (Bulgaria and Hungary). Stronger aspirations for neutrality were seen in Hungary. It was also noted that there were separatist tendencies in the Baltic Soviet republics, which would dangerously boost the opposition to Gorbachev in the Soviet bureaucratic and military apparatus. Vienna considered it best if the West practiced restraint. The transformation of the Warsaw Pact into a (defensive) military alliance that no longer had the authority to intervene in internal affairs was seen by the majority of the member states as the goal.<sup>69</sup>

The foreign ministers’ meeting in Warsaw 26–27 October, the first Warsaw Pact meeting without a communist chair, went well. With the increasing equality of the member states’ rights on foreign policy issues, the need was seen for improved coordination through the establishment of a permanent (political) Warsaw Pact secretariat. Vienna recommended that the West encourage these develop-

<sup>68</sup> Report, Austrian embassy Belgrad, “Zum Warschauer Pakt-Gipfel in Bukarest (7–8 July 1989),” Zl. 395-RES/89, 2 August 1989, in BMEIA, Zl. 701.03/14 and 16-II.3/89.

<sup>69</sup> Report Abteilung II.3, “Osteuropa. Generelle Tendenzen,” Zl. 350-RES/89, 13 December 1989, in BMEIA, Zl. 713/78-II.3/89 (642li).



ments, also during the Vienna CSCE negotiations. Moreover, the Austrian chancellery was watching the desperate Soviet attempts to create a more efficient basis for CMEA cooperation. Vienna thought it very unlikely that this would happen, due to the attractiveness of the European Community as well as EFTA. Austrian foreign policymakers were aware that the West had the great task of economically assisting the East European states and cautiously binding them institutionally (Council of Europe, EFTA, EC). EFTA could not take on the function of a waiting room, and therefore the EC and EFTA had to act in tandem. Western economic support had to be reform-oriented (“structural reform consistency”). At the Ballhausplatz it was accurately recognized that economic structural reforms represented “a bigger problem” than had been previously thought. The process would be happening for the first time in history under the worst possible conditions: debt burden, poor infrastructure, obsolete institutions. Then again, the generally high educational level of the Eastern population was noted. If the economic reforms failed in the medium-term, it was feared that the political reforms would be threatened. The possibility of these countries tipping toward nationalist right-wing governments or military regimes could not be ruled out. A return to the old communist rule in the Warsaw Pact countries was considered possible only if a concurrent revolution occurred in Moscow. At the Ballhausplatz, the central issue was therefore considered the continued existence of the Soviet course of reforms. Despite Gorbachev’s apparently strong political position, increasing signs were already noted in December 1989 that the gap between the accelerated political change and the slow economic reforms would become dangerous. Washington also thought this to be the case. With the rapid changes in East Germany and the reaction of West Germany, pan-European issues were being faced. From the Austrian viewpoint, these were to be addressed “calmly.” With regard to the question of (re-)unification, the right to self-determination was emphasized, which Austria supported unconditionally. According to the Ballhausplatz, it was “self-evident that this also applied to the people of both German states.” Nonetheless, any reorganization of the German-German relationship should be done in a manner that neither endangered the process of détente and peace in Europe, nor created questions regarding the inviolability of the postwar borders for the neighboring countries.<sup>70</sup>

#### IV. Transnational party cooperation

To date, the role of transnational party cooperation has received scant attention in connection with the changes in Central and Eastern Europe. While the social democrats and socialists were noticeably reserved—which had not only to do with the fundamental question of assessing existing socialism and its future, but

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

also repercussions concerning the value of its ideology and politics—Christian democratic and conservative party representatives were noticeably more active.

Already years before the dramatic events of 1989–90, the party representatives who had joined together in the aforementioned European Democrat Union (EDU) had registered that changes were emerging in the so-called Eastern bloc. The EDU perceived itself as a kind of “Anti-Communist International” (Eichtinger and Wohnout), with numerous contacts to dissident groups. Mock saw a new era opening with General Secretary Gorbachev. As he pointed out in September 1988 at the EDU party-leaders conference in Rhodes, “Nevertheless one thing is certain: a wind of change is blowing also in Eastern Europe.” He did not consider Gorbachev a revolutionary; he was rather a reformer who was not aspiring to change the communist system, but to improve it. At the EDU steering committee in Stockholm on 30 June 1989, it was decided to support the democratization processes as well as the “like-minded” parties. Gabor Roszik, the first freely elected opposition member of the Hungarian Parliament who had won his seat in a by-election, was a guest at the second EDU parliamentary conference in Antalya from 24 to 26 August 1989. Mock saw the EDU as having the “assignment” of developing new parties in Central and Eastern Europe. To explore the political field, fact finding missions were conducted in Estonia, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria.<sup>71</sup>

Relatively early, on 13 November 1989 at a meeting of delegates to the EDU held in the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Sankt Augustin near Bonn, a clear commitment to “German reunification” was made. Four days after the opening of the Berlin Wall the European Committee of the EDU

congratulated Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl and his government on the developments in inner-German relations. The firm insistence on the Basic Law and its implication by the CDU/CSU contributed to this success just as much as their adherence to the principle, unlike the SPD, not to enter into friendly relations with the SED, the communist party, which bears the responsibility for the old regime of terror. Only a few weeks ago the SPD still tried to conduct top-level talks with the SED, thus stabilizing this party.

The EDU welcomes and supports the courageous and far-sighted attitude of Chancellor Kohl to respond to the crisis in the GDR with a broad offer of aid, if those in power initiate a process of democratization.

The Committee will support Chancellor Kohl and his government in all further steps that lead to peaceful development as well as to more freedom and democracy in the GDR. The EDU supports the desire of the Germans to complete the unity of Germany in freedom and peace in exercising the right of self-determination.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Eichtinger and Wohnout, *Alois Mock*, 152–55. The author would also like to thank Helmut Wohnout for providing a copy of his manuscript of the article “Österreichs Außenminister Alois Mock, Deutschland und Europa,” which he presented at the History Department at the University of Hildesheim in the fall/winter semester of 2010–11.

<sup>72</sup> 28th Meeting of the EDU Committee on “European Structures - European Policy” in St. Augustin/Bonn, 13 November 1989, in Archiv des Karl von Vogelsang-Instituts, Vienna (AKvVI),

The EDU Committee then also adopted the declaration under the heading “For a united Europe in peace and freedom” and expressed its clear support of the federal government’s demand for Germany’s reunification as well as pointing out its continued integration in the West (and consequently its disapproval of neutrality or neutralization for a united Germany):

The EDU welcomes and supports the peaceful development toward more freedom and democracy in the GDR. It reconfirms the desire of the Germans to complete the unity of Germany in peace and freedom in exercising their right of self-determination. [...] The attractiveness of Western European integration has had a positive influence on developments in Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore the economic and political unification of the European Community must be strengthened further. This is a prerequisite for political evolution in Germany. The three Western powers, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France, continue to have treaty obligations and political commitments with regard to Germany. Likewise, the member states of the European Community and the EC itself are called upon to implement such a policy.<sup>73</sup>

On 30 and 31 August 1990, the EDU accepted the membership of the first new democratic parties in Central and Eastern Europe, and the Hungarian Christian democrat József Antall became the EDU’s vice president. This development was mainly due to the efforts of ÖVP politicians, including Erhard Busek and Andreas Khol, but especially Alois Mock, who served from 1979 to 1998 as the chairman of the EDU.<sup>74</sup>

## V. The reaction of the Austrian population

In May 1990, the Ballhausplatz became aware that in the Austrian population interest in foreign policy had increased. On one hand, this had to do with the events in Central and Eastern Europe; on the other, it had developed out of the deliberations regarding how to define Austria’s relationship with the EC. Based on a survey conducted by the Sozialwissenschaftliche Studiengesellschaft, it had emerged that almost a third of the Austrian population was “very” interested in foreign policy issues, twice as many as those who were “very” interested in domestic policy.<sup>75</sup>

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Materialbestand EDU 1989–90, EDU/1989/1705 rev 14-11-1989. Dr. Hannes Schönner kindly allowed the author preliminary access to this and the following document.

<sup>73</sup> Declaration “For a united Europe in peace and freedom” of the EDU meeting in St. Augustin/Bonn, 13 November 1989, *ibid.*, EDU/1989/1700 rev, 14-11-1989. See also Hans Stark, *Helmut Kohl. L’Allemagne et l’Europe. La politique d’intégration européenne de la République fédérale 1982–1998* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2004), 145–57.

<sup>74</sup> Eichtinger and Wohnout, *Mock*, 155.

<sup>75</sup> Report Nowotny, “Interesse für Außenpolitik stark gestiegen und liegt nun weit über dem Interesse für Innenpolitik,” 4 May 1990, sent to the Austrian embassies, in BMEIA, GZ. 502.02.01/68-II.6/90.

Of 2,000 Austrians surveyed by two Austrian marketing research companies Fessel + GfK (Institut für Marktforschung) and the Institut für Empirische Sozialforschung (IFES) in the period between November 1990 and January 1991, 87% responded to the question of how they saw Germany's unification with "rather positively," in contrast to 10% who responded with "quite negatively." The largest number of negative responses were from members of the Green Party, with nearly 20%. Interestingly, over 10% of the right-wing Freedom Party (FPÖ) also expressed a negative reaction. In this context, the answer to whether or not Austria should become part of the unified Germany was also quite revealing. Altogether, 92% responded with no to this question, and only 6% said yes. Nonetheless, 10% of those who had FPÖ leanings were for a merger, while Green Party members had the largest number against, with 95%.<sup>76</sup>

As to the general question of the expected impact of unification, the most frequent responses were unspecified consequences for business and industry (32%), an increase in tourists from former East Germany (12%), problems with immigrants to Austria (8%), and greater market opportunities and trade growth (7%). Nearly two-thirds were worried by the fact that approximately 60% of the Austrian companies acquired by foreigners in recent years were in German hands. This was because Austria's economic dependence on the Federal Republic was already quite high. If Germany were reunified, 19% believed that there would be a revival of "Anschluss thinking" in Austria, whereas 77% disagreed.<sup>77</sup> On one hand, this data confirmed Austria's strong support of German unification, but on the other hand, it also showed Austria's mature sense of identity and the stable perception of the Austrian nation, to which the Austrian foreign policy and the diplomacy of the Ballhausplatz during the previous decades had contributed significantly. Ideas of Greater Germany belonged to the past.

## VI. Conclusion

Austria responded early and positively to the reform efforts in the states of Central and Eastern Europe. Its strongest sympathies were for the changes in Hungary, as well as for those in Poland, albeit to a lesser degree. The reaction to the developments in Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria ranged from skeptical to disapproving. The end of the GDR had an entirely different impact and was to change the situation dramatically. The collapse of the communist dictatorship was received in Vienna with mixed feelings. While Vranitzky's attitude toward a reform-minded GDR was open, well-disposed and even friendly, Mock clearly

<sup>76</sup> Gehler, "Eine Außenpolitik der Anpassung", 522.

<sup>77</sup> Hanspeter Neuhold, "Die deutsche Wiedervereinigung und ihre Folgen," in idem and Paul Luif, eds., *Das Außenpolitische Bewußtsein der Österreicher: Aktuelle internationale Probleme im Spiegel der Meinungsforschung* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1992), 35–36, 241, 244.

sided with Kohl's policy. Dissent within the coalition was unmistakable. The differing attitudes of the Austrian government leaders toward the German developments were also due to their different lines regarding the EC. Mock's course was focusing on accession to the EC, whereby he was relying on West German support, just as he had also expressed his early support for Kohl's Germany policy. Vranitzky moved thoughtfully and carefully with regard to Austria's application for EC membership, at all times emphasizing and upholding the government's policy of neutrality. This resulted in his more economic-pragmatic approach to the reform movements in Central and Eastern Europe, while Mock's position was more strongly based on anti-communist—that is, ideological—as well humanitarian and cultural-political motives. In the second half of the 1980s, the ÖVP, with Busek and Mock, was more focused on Central and Eastern Europe than the SPÖ under Vranitzky. With the exception of the rapid onset of the German unification movement, which surprised all who were involved (except for Thomas Nowotny), it is amazing how accurately the changes in the other states were assessed.

To conclude, five aspects should be established:

1. Vienna was accurate in its assessment of the actual interdependence and mutual interaction between glasnost and perestroika in the Soviet Union and the changes in Central and Eastern Europe.
2. Gorbachev's key role in the reform processes and the further opening of Central and Eastern Europe was recognized by Vienna early: Whether the developments stood or fell was dependent on him. This is why the stability of the Gorbachev regime was accorded a top priority. In this regard, Austria's foreign policy moved completely in line with that of the West.
3. The reform movements in Central and Eastern Europe were judged realistically with regard to their significance and stage of development. The difference between the pioneering role of Poland and Hungary and the slower headway in Bulgaria, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Romania was evaluated reliably and with fine distinctions.
4. The fact that the German question might result in a significant shift of power in Central Europe was perfectly clear in Vienna. The diplomats at the Ballhausplatz did not follow the changes in East Germany only by waiting and sitting still, but with a sense of urgency and concern. The fall of the GDR was different than the changes occurring in Hungary and Poland. While Vranitzky tried to moderate and Mock acted in a pronounced pro-unification manner, Busek remained silent.
5. The CSCE offered an important stabilizing and conciliatory framework into which the dramatic upheavals could be placed. This was also the consensus among all twelve EU member states. Austria's mediation services within the CSCE follow-up process and Vienna as a meeting place had a positive impact on the further developments.

The only decisive way for Austria to intervene politically in the course of the events just before the fall of the Berlin Wall was through the symbolic cutting of the Iron Curtain and the assistance and support it gave to fleeing East German citizens. The Austro-Hungarian prologue in the summer of 1989 was decisive for the extreme speed of the developments in Germany that autumn. The decision to reunify Germany and to free the Central and Eastern part of the continent from communist dictatorship as well as Soviet oppression and involve it in the medium and long-term European integration project was the result of a “glorious moment of diplomacy.”<sup>78</sup> The decisions were not only made in Vienna, but in Moscow, Washington, Bonn, and later in Brussels within the framework of NATO and the EU.

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<sup>78</sup> Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Sternstunde der Diplomatie. Die deutsche Einheit und das Ende der Spaltung Europas*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Propyläen, 2001), 483–91.