

# 1989: the end of Europe's division. A new Europe through integration

## Austria. The Revolutions in Central and South Eastern Europe. Austrian Perceptions and International Reactions 1989-90

Michael GEHLER

*Abstract: The historical significance of the year 1989 was global; it was a year in which the entire world changed dramatically.<sup>1</sup> This article deals with Austrian perceptions and international reactions to the revolutionary changes that occurred in Central and South Eastern Europe in 1989-90. This will first be examined in relation to the events in Poland (I.) and to the dramatic events at the Hungarian border, especially the Austrian reaction to the resulting wave of East German refugees (II.). Next will be analyzed the Austrian reaction to the revolutionary events in Czechoslovakia (III.) and, briefly, to the events in Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia (IV.). The last section will describe how the role of the Warsaw Pact (V.) was evaluated.*

### *I. Austria's Foreign Policy and Poland 1989*

On 17 January 1989, Austria's Foreign Minister Alois Mock mentioned, in passing at the final Vienna Conference on Security and Cooperation of Europe (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 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>2</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

1 Pierre Grosser, 1989. *L'année où le monde a basculé*, Paris: Perrin, 2009.

2 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. An edition project and a separate book documenting these records is forthcoming. I would like to thank Ambassadors Fritz Bauer and Franz Wunderbalddinger, as well as Ministerialrat Gottfried Loibl for their support in this project.

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>3</sup>

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

The Austrian Chancellor Franz 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 Nagyoenk 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 “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>4</sup>

For this reason, since May 1988 the aim had been to accelerate the separation of party and state, to establish 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 needs 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

---

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

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, a new political competitive situation was emerging in Hungary, one 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 regarding the auto and rail industry, 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 eastern-most 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 European Communities (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>5</sup> In March Hungary joined the Geneva Refugee’s Convention, entering into force on 12 June. The dismantling of the Hungarian border barricades had already begun on 2 May 1989.<sup>6</sup>

The cutting of the Iron Curtain by Alois Mock and Hungary’s Foreign Minister Gyula Horn on 27 June actually only involved last remnants of the barbed wire fences, as most of them had already been removed. The whole action was more

5 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; see also 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: NeueWeltVerlag 2012, pp. 135–179.

6 Andreas Oplatka, *Der erste Riss in der Mauer. September 1989 – Ungarn öffnet die Grenze*, Vienna: Paul Zsolnay, 2009, pp. 87–104; 154–99; John Lewis Gaddis, *Der Kalte Krieg. Eine neue Geschichte*, Munich: Siedler, 2007, pp. 302–303; Bernd Stöver, *Der Kalte Krieg. Geschichte eines radikalen Zeitalters 1947–1991*, Munich: Beck, 2007, p. 443; Ilko-Sascha Kowalcuk, *Endspiel. Die Revolution von 1989 in der DDR*, Munich: Beck, 2009, p. 346.

staged for the media. The images of the events that were provided by the television cameras 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>7</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 the 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 the European Free Trade Association (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 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

<sup>7</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

Foreign Minister). Horn pointed to the major importance of the 13 June 1989 joint statement of the Federal Republic of Germany and the USSR, in which the need for changes in the internal political situation had been established (it included also the right of self-determination for the German people).<sup>8</sup>

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 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>9</sup>

Mock outlined some basic Austrian positions concerning the reform efforts:

1. The respective states were to make sovereign decisions;

8 Information Sucharipa “BRD-Sowjetunion; Gemeinsame Erklärung vom 13.6.1989”, 15 June 1989, in BMEIA, GZ. 225.01.01/17-II.3/89; see also the point “Achtung des Selbstbestimmungsrechts der Völker”, in Bulletin [der deutschen Bundesregierung], 15 June 1989, No. 61, pp. 542-544, here p. 542, see also Document 2 “Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers Kohl mit Generalsekretär Gorbatschow Bonn, 12. Juni 1989”, Document 3 “Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers Kohl mit Generalsekretär Gorbatschow Bonn, 13. Juni 1989” and Document 4 “Delegationsgespräch des Bundeskanzlers Kohl mit Generalsekretär Gorbatschow Bonn, 13. Juni 1989”, in Hanns Jürgen Küsters/Daniel Hofmann, *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik. Deutsche Einheit. Sonderedition aus den Akten des Bundeskanzleramtes 1989/90*, Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998, pp. 276-299; additionally see also Andreas Hilger (Ed.), *Diplomatie für die deutsche Einheit. Dokumente des Auswärtigen Amts zu den deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen 1989/90* (Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 103), Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011.

9 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.

2. Austria was reacting 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;

3. Austrian support should not cause any inconvenience, whereby Mock stated that he would be grateful for any suggestions;

4. The opening of Eastern Europe would not be lessening the role of Austria, but widening its possibilities;

5. 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>10</sup>

Here, Mock was referring to the slogans of Nikita S. Khrushchev and Mikhail S. Gorbachev, seeing it 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>11</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>12</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 representative 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

---

10 *Ibid.*

11 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.

12 "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, *ibid.*, GZL. 33.03.00/172-II.3/89.

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, ČSSR, Romania) and Bulgaria to the events in China was also unanimous, although the reaction of the ČSSR was less severe.

The army's intervention was declared 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>13</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>14</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 five days without food in a Budapest church so that he could meet his West German fiancée.<sup>15</sup>

A few years ago, Németh acknowledged in a television interview that these fatal incidents, especially the death of the GDR citizen Schulz, were the crucial events

13 *Ibid.*

14 APA Report 0263 5 AI, 22 August 1989.

15 APA Report 0117 5 AI, 28 August 1989.

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>16</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>17</sup>

Medical care and ointments were needed for sunburns and babies suffering from countless 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>18</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 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,

---

16 ORF ZIB 2 Report, 19 August 2009.

17 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, pp. 579–84; Jens Schöne, *The Peaceful Revolution. Berlin 1989/90 – The Path to German Unity*, Berlin (Berlin Story Verlag) 2009, pp. 53–69, here pp. 54–61; Interview with Countess Maria Octavia von Brühl, 26 February 2013 in Vienna as well as Graf/Lass/Ruzicic-Kessler, *Das Burgenland*.

18 Brühl, "Flucht in die Freiheit", p. 4.

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>19</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>20</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>21</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, and his deputy, Erich Kussbach, and an agreement was reached. Brühl recalls: “It was a

---

19 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

20 On this conversation, see Genscher’s memorandum, 25 August 1989, in Küsters and Hofmann, eds., *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, pp. 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; without mentioning Austria’s and Mock’s role when opening the Austro-Hungarian border see Andreas Rödder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland. Die Geschichte der Wiedervereinigung*, Munich: Beck 2009, pp. 72–75; Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Helmut Kohl. Eine politische Biographie*, Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt 2012, 526. In contrast to Rödder and Schwarz see Grosser, 1989. *L’année où le monde a basculé*, pp. 44–45; Kowalcuk, *Endspiel*, pp. 350–351, 377.

21 *Ibid.* At the end of the statement was a hidden message to the refugees. See also, Helmut Kohl, *Erinnerungen 1982–1990*, Munich: Droemer, 2005, pp. 921–23; concerning Bonn’s instrumentalization of the GDR’s refugee problem and the intensified reform process in Central Europe see Janusz Sawczuk, *Turbulentes 1989. Genese der deutschen Einheit* (Nationalisms across the Globe 6), Oxford – Bern – Berlin – Bruxelles – Frankfurt am Main – New York – Wien: Peter Lang, 2011, pp. 174–206.

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>22</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 from the Österreichische Bundesbahn (ÖBB) was practical for preserving neutrality. A combination of train-bus or even only trains was ruled out, because 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>23</sup>

Each Trabi 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>24</sup>

On September 10-11, the border was opened for free crossing. Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl was aware of the date by September 4 as a result of an agreement by his advisor Horst Teltschik with Hungarian Prime Minister Miklós Németh. Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher was in the loop at the latest as of September 7 after Horn had informed employees of the German Federal Foreign Office in Budapest. Bonn had provided substantial financial assurances and thus had also made Hungary more inclined to follow through. On September 12, the paralyzed SED Politburo belatedly discussed countermeasures in East Berlin that

22 Brühl, "Flucht in die Freiheit", p. 7.

23 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* (Historische Europa-Studien 5), Hildesheim – Zürich – New York: Olms, 2012, pp. 148-172, here pp. 169-170.

24 Brühl, "Flucht in die Freiheit", p. 9.

had been hectically developed by the Stasi, but it had neither political arguments nor concrete means of exerting pressure with respect to Budapest. Considerations about recalling the ambassador were dropped. At first, there was not even a decision about heightened controls on GDR tourists going to Hungary. 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>25</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 ten thousand 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>26</sup>

The German-Austrian-Hungarian cooperation, which, whether unwittingly or consciously, further aggravated the erosion of the SED regime, was thus not particularly expensive.

25 See the backgrounds and developments presented very detailed in different chapters by Oplatka, *Der erste Riss in der Mauer*, pp. 170-184, 184-199, 199-216, 216-230; neither document nor mentioning these forms of German-Austrian-Hungarian cooperation during the summer of 1989 Ines Lehmann, *Die Außenpolitik der DDR 1989/90. Eine dokumentierte Rekonstruktion*, Baden-Baden: Nomos 2011, to the Foreign and Europe policy of Kohl see Günter Buchstab/Hans-Otto Kleinmann (Bearb.), *Helmut Kohl. Berichte zur Lage 1989-1998. Der Kanzler und Parteivorsitzende im Bundesvorstand der CDU Deutschlands* (Forschungen und Quellen zur Zeitgeschichte 64), Düsseldorf: Droste, 2012, introduction: XXXII-XXXVI, XL-XLIII, 12-14, 38-39 as well as the documents: 9. 10. 1989, pp. 11-17; 6. 11. 1989, p. 36; 15. 11. 1989, pp. 37-39, 43-48, 27. 11. 1989, pp. 52-59; 15. 1. 1990, pp. 71-75; 11. 6. 1990, pp. 145-150.

26 Brühl, “Flucht in die Freiheit”, pp. 10-11.

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”, 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>27</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>28</sup>

The position of the USA from the view of the diplomatic reports and evaluations of the political situation by the Austrian Foreign Ministry (BMfA) 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 Wladimir I. Lenin’s Decree on Peace to the idea of a “common house” in Europe), 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 (INF) Treaty of 1987 was adopted as a foreign policy success of US president Ronald Reagan. Austria’s geopolitical situation was taken into account by American military and security strategists in their considerations and evaluated negatively, that is, it was viewed as a weak point (literally a “nightmare”) for the defense of Western Europe.<sup>29</sup>

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12, quote here p. 12; see also Horst Teltschik, 329 Tage. Innenansichten der Einigung, Berlin (Siedler) 1991, p. 39.

28 Report “BRD; Regierungserklärung des Bundeskanzlers zur Lage der Nation im geteilten Deutschland (8.11.1989)”, Loibl, Austrian embassy Bonn, to Austrian BMfA, 10 November 1989, in Archive of the Austrian embassy Bonn, Nr?. Zl. 21.56.02/2-A/89.

29 Report “Einige Aspekte der Sicherheitspolitik des Westens (Lage zu Jahresbeginn 1988)”, Plattner, 2 February 1988, in BMEIA GZ. 703/1-II.1/88.

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 the proposal for a neutralization of Germany (such as by the Modrow Plan of 1990) as "very dangerous".<sup>30</sup>

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 newly present its function as a bridge between East and West through its neutrality, which for the most part still remained untouched.

### *III. The changes in the Czechoslovak Republic*

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 ČSSR 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 it 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

---

30 Quotation from Information "Österreichisch-amerikanische KSZE-Konsultationen (Washington, 2.2.1990)", Vukovich, 7 February 1990, in BMEIA GZ. 807.30/39-II.7/90; also in that respect: Aktenvermerk "Besuch des stv. amerikanischen AM Eagleburger in Wien (23. bis 25.2.) Besuch bei HBM, Round Table-Gespräch; AV", Prohaska, 5 March 1990, in BMEIA GZ. 224.18.13./2-II.9/90.

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 question".<sup>31</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.<sup>32</sup>

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>33</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>34</sup>

#### *IV. 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>35</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

31 Record entry, Sucharipa m. p., "CSSR; offizieller Besuch Ministerpräsident Adamec; Gesamteindruck", 30 October 1989, in BMEIA, GZ. 35.18.09/36-II.3/89.

32 *Ibid.*

33 Report Valentin Inzko "Der Wandel in Europa als Herausforderung für Österreich," Rede des Herrn Bundesministers im Nationalrat; Verteilung [15.3.1990]" 16 March 1990, in BMEIA, ZL. 700.17.15/149-I.3/90.

34 *Ibid.*

35 Anneli Ute Gabanyi, *Die unvollendete Revolution: Rumänien zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie*, 2nd ed., Munich: Piper, 1990, pp. 82-131.

registered as being 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>36</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 situation in Romania”.<sup>37</sup>

However, due to the nature of the Security Council decision-making process, with permanent members having veto power, the Council was blocked (by Moscow and Beijing). 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”.<sup>38</sup>

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>39</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 initiated a brutal bulgarization = assimilation policy against the Turkish population which led to mass flights). Additional to these facts 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>40</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>41</sup>

In the 1990s, Europe was to experience three new wars in the so-called Balkan (from 1991, Slovenia-Croatia against “Rump Yugoslavia”, the latter one against the part-republics of Slovenia and Croatia that had declared themselves independent; from 1992 to 1995, a civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina; and in 1999, NATO against “rest Yugoslavia” as a result of the Kosovo crisis). There had already been four Balkan wars until 1945 (in 1912, 1913, 1914–1918, and 1941–1945), and

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

37 Speech Mock, “Der Wandel in Europa als Herausforderung für Österreich”, 15 March 1990.

38 *Ibid.*

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

40 Speech Mock, “Der Wandel in Europa als Herausforderung für Österreich”, 15 March 1990.

41 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.

thus today one can count a total of seven Balkan wars in the twentieth century. The year 1989 and the liberation movements in Central and Eastern Europe were not to change that.

#### *V. 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>42</sup> was marked 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 ČSSR'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 the partners now, after having neither informed nor consulted them with regard to his unilateral handling the dispute with Ankara (because of the heavy pressures against the Turkish minority in his own country).<sup>43</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 a course of reform, from which "positive regeneration effects" would develop. Pragmatically, shifts were occurring in Moscow's limits regarding what it considered 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 had also been noted that there were separatist tendencies in the Baltic Soviet republics, which would dangerously boost the opposition to Gorbachev in

42 Document No. 146: Records of the Political Consultative Committee Meeting in Bucharest, July 7-8, 1989, in Vojtech Mastny/Malcolm Byrne, *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact 1955-1991*, Budapest – New York: CEU Press, 2005, pp. 644-654.

43 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.

the 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>44</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 should encourage these developments, 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 the 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).

The 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

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

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>45</sup>

## *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 the reform minded GDR was open, well-disposed and even friendly, Mock clearly 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, 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

---

45 *Ibid.*

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-German especially 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 the autumn in Germany. The decision to unify Germany and to free the Central and Eastern part of the continent from communist dictatorship as well as from soviet oppression and involve it in the medium and long-term European integration project was the result of a "glorious moment of diplomacy".<sup>46</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.

---

46 Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Sternstunde der Diplomatie. Die deutsche Einheit und das Ende der Spaltung Europas*, 2nd ed., Munich: Propyläen, 2001, pp. 483-491.