

Letter from André François-Poncet to Antoine Pinay (Bonn, 16 May 1955)

Caption: On 16 May 1955, André François-Poncet, French Ambassador in Bonn, describes to Antoine Pinay, French Foreign Minister, the mixed feelings in German political circles with regard to the Austrian State Treaty.

Source: Ministère des Affaires étrangères; Commission de publication des DDF (sous la dir.). Documents diplomatiques français. Volume I: 1955, 1er janvier-30 juin. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1987. 849 p. p. 659-660.

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T. Nos 1882 to 1886.

Bonn, 16 May 1955, 9.20 p.m.

(Received: 9.35 p.m.)

The Federal Republic has mixed feelings about the signing of the Austrian State Treaty. Official circles in Bonn probably greeted the news with polite satisfaction. However, behind the polite façade lie hidden complex reactions. Some people cannot help envying the fate of this small country, 'Austria Felix', which has just regained its freedom, and they compare it with the fate of Germany that continues to be divided and, in part, under foreign dominion. Others note, not without a little envy, that the four powers have decided no longer to discuss Austria's role in the outbreak of the Second World War. Everyone angrily criticises the way in which the issue of German assets was resolved and welcomes the representations made by the Federal Government about this to the Austrian Government and to the four Western Powers.

Observers were more interested in the political significance of the Treaty than in the articles themselves. They noted with great interest the speech by Mr Molotov in which he invited other states, notably Germany, to follow the Austrian example. It is the first time that the intentions of the Kremlin leadership have appeared so clearly. Through a strange turn of events, the Russians wish to bring about, on a moral level, a 'reverse Anschluss', with Germany, free of any commitments, aligned with neutralised Austria. In their view, such plans are all the more likely in light of the visit to Belgrade by Mr Khrushchev and Marshal Bulganin who will try, with Marshal Tito, to forge the second link in a chain of neutral states stretching from the Adriatic to Sweden.

This 'revival' of international politics gives the German public new hope of one day living in a reunited country. It welcomes the fact that the Heads of Government of the four powers will meet during the summer and hopes that they will make progress towards détente. However, at the same time, they do not mistake their wishes for reality. They refuse to consider achieving reunification at the cost of embracing a neutrality which the major powers would be even more reluctant to guarantee than in the case of Austria. Despite the impression that détente is improving, the general public continues to be haunted by security concerns. If proof were needed of this, there is little doubt that it can be found in the recent election results in Rhineland-Palatinate which have constituted almost a re-run of the 1953 plebiscite in support of Mr Adenauer.