

Letter from Léon Marchal to Guy Mollet (Strasbourg, 9 March 1956)

Caption: On 9 March 1956, Léon Marchal, Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, sends a letter to Guy Mollet, French President of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe, in which he outlines the positive opinion of the members of the Standing Committee regarding Austria's accession to the Council of Europe.

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Strasbourg, 9th March 1956

Monsieur le Président,

In accordance with the request contained in your letter of 1st March, I wrote to the members of the Standing Committee about the admission of Austria as a Member of the Council of Europe and asked them to reply by telegram.

I have the honour to inform you of the outcome of this consultation.

Twenty-four members of the Standing Committee expressed themselves in favour. The replies of four of them, namely M. Rolin and the three British members of the Committee: Lord Layton, Sir Robert Boothby and Mr. Edwards, contained comments of reservations, the text of which is enclosed herewith. Four members of the Committee did not reply within the time-limit, which expired yesterday.

I also enclose a table showing how each member replied.

The Standing Committee has thus, on behalf of the Consultative Assembly, unanimously expressed itself in favour of the admission of Austria as a Member of the Council of Europe.

Following this consultation, and to implement the decisions taken by the Ministers' Deputies at the 38th Meeting held in Strasbourg, I today sent a letter to the Austrian Observer to the Council of Europe containing Resolution (56) 4, dated 8th inst., in which the Committee of Ministers invited Austria to become a Member of the Council of Europe. A copy of this Resolution is appended.

At the same time I reminded M. Ludwig that, in accordance with Article 4 of the Statute, it was now up to the Republic of Austria to deposit with me an instrument of accession to the said Statute.

Arrangements have been made so that the deposit of the instrument of accession and admission of the Republic of Austria to Membership of the Council of Europe could take place at 10 a.m. on 16th of April, at the opening of the 18th Session of the Committee of Ministers.

I have also sent M. Ludwig the usual form for the drawing up of the credentials of the Austrian Representatives and Substitutes to the Assembly so that they may be appointed in good time and take part in the work of the 8th Session from the beginning.

I remain, Monsieur le Président,

Your obedient Servant,

L. MARCHAL

Monsieur Guy Mollet,
President of the Consultative Assembly,
Paris XVIe.

Table of Comments and Reservations Expressed by four members of the Standing Committee

Sir Robert Boothby's reply (telegram of 5th March 1956)

Agree to invitation but hope they will be asked simultaneously to sign Convention Human Rights.

Mr. Edward's reply (telegram of 5th March 1956)

Agree in principle but think decision should await meeting of Standing Committee.

M. Rolin's reply

(a) letter of 5th March 1956

1. I hope that Austria will become an ordinary Member of the Council of Europe.
2. I consider this to be legally compatible with Austria's neutral status, since the co-operation which is the purpose of our European organisation does not under the terms of our Statute extend to military and political matters.
3. In point of fact, however, I fear that owing to the continual incursions of the Council of Europe into the political arena and the systematic hostility shown by the Assembly to the USSR, Austria may not wish to join the Council.
4. I do not know if Austria is informed of the position but wishes to disregard such objections. I should prefer in case of doubt to leave it responsible for its own decision which would certainly be less compromising than an invitation from the Council.

(b) telegram of 6th March 1956

In support my opinion on Austrian problem draw your attention to declaration of 15th March last by Swiss Minister Petit-Pierre published in "Chronique belge de politique étrangère" last January.

Lord Layton's reply (telegram of 3rd March 1956)

Reference your letter regarding Austrian admission to Council am fully in accord in principle stop But much regret haste in asking our opinion without opportunity for Standing Committee to discuss so important a matter in all its aspects stop For example on previous occasions we have been aware of possible reaction of the general diplomatic situation and even embarrassment in some quarters stop We should be fully advised of present position in this respect stop Secondly this being first admission since the Human Rights Convention came into effect Assembly should say whether it regards acceptance of Convention as condition of full membership especially in light of suggestion of possible relationships of somewhat different type with some other countries stop Hope Ministers will make Assembly's view clear in this respect stop Agree proposal for six representatives in Assembly stop

Table of votes of the members of the Standing Committee on the accession of Austria to the Council of Europe.

Expressed their agreement : 21 members

MM. Guy Mollet, President
Boggiano Pico
Bruins Slot
Corish
Celikbas
Elmgren
Federspiel
van der Goes van Naters
Heyman
Josefsson

Kiesinger
Margue
de Menthon
Mercouris
Müller
Pernot
Perrier
Pünder
Schmid Carlo (for Lütkens)
Smitt Ingebretsen
van Cauwelaert
Wistrand

Expressed their agreement with various comments and reservations:4 members (see appendices)

Sir Robert Boothby
Mr. Edwards (for Noel-Baker)
Lord Layton
M. Rolin

Did not reply:3 members

MM. Benvenuti
Harunoglu
Romanos

The proposal to invite Austria was unanimously agreed to.