

Lecture given by Leopold Gratz on security and cooperation in Europe (27 November 1985)

Caption: On 27 November 1985, Leopold Gratz, Austrian Foreign Minister, gives an address in Vienna on the implications of the third Follow-up Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and emphasises Austria's tangible participation in various CSCE initiatives.

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The whole world is under the spell of the Geneva summit. The media have realised the importance of the event, which has justly dominated the news and thus public opinion. There is a general feeling of relief that the dialogue has been resumed after a long time and that the two sides have again engaged in detailed and frank discussions. I share this feeling, and I believe that the meeting has meant an important step forward.

The fact that the two statesmen discussed between them the fate of the world, however, has given rise to new apprehension: the fear that two men, or two states, might want to act above the heads of those concerned and might in some way wish to divide the world and its problems between them.

Things are not easy for the great powers: If they do not talk to each other they will be blamed for forcing a climate of confrontation upon the world. And if they finally get to the point of talking to each other they will be suspected of attempting to spread their condominium over the world.

To be sure: The world does not belong exclusively to the superpowers. It is also our world as it is the world of other small and medium-sized states.

Small countries such as ours cannot change the world order. But what we can try to do is help to make sure that there is a certain amount of predictability and constancy, that there are certain formal rules to guide us. As we ourselves are committed to predictability and constancy, particularly in foreign policy, it is our preeminent interest that the self-same predictability and constancy prevail throughout the world to the greatest possible extent.

One important endeavour to promote this predictability and constancy in our own region, in Europe, is the so-called Helsinki process. And it is this process - CSCE, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe - I should like to discuss in greater detail today.

We Austrians know, perhaps better than others, that Europe is not just Western Europe. And we know that the political, military and ideological division of Europe into two camps impairs our awareness of our common culture and identity. This division has persisted for a long time, but perhaps one should see it, too, in historical perspective:

Despite all frontiers, military pacts and different social systems the CSCE countries have much in common: common political traditions, a common cultural heritage, regional problems that cut across the dividing lines between systems. Austria, which borders on two NATO nations, two members of the Warsaw Treaty, two neutral countries and one non-aligned state, lies right at the centre of the broad spectrum of one and the same Europe. Austria's policy vis-à-vis her neighbours has always aimed at identifying the greatest possible number of areas of cooperation, since we know that common problems and tasks require common solutions.

This policy has proved beneficial not only to the Austrian people but also to people in the neighbouring countries, and we believe to all those countries which share the responsibility for the fate of Europe. For the great problems of today can only be solved by a common effort.

An integrated East-West policy requires a businesslike and differentiated approach to other political and social ideas and models. As a pluralistic democracy Austria is not afraid of getting in touch with them. We believe that a peaceful competition of ideas is useful and meaningful, but is possible only in a climate fostering dialogue, mutual respect and cooperation.

This area has so far proved stable and crisis-proof despite all the polemics that have beset the security-policy aspect of East-West relations since the early 1980s. This supports the views of those who feel with Austria that peace can be secured, not by more and new weaponry but only by more confidence and greater calculability. It goes without saying that detente in Europe alone is not sufficient to provide for stability and security. European detente should therefore not be burdened with problems which only the two superpowers

can really resolve on a bilateral basis. Any integrated policy of detente must be accompanied by intensive arms control and confidence-building between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Austria is not disappointed at the progress of the policy of detente as a whole. Rather, we have come to see that progress in some areas of East-West relations may require more time than others.

From the Austrian point of view the aim is not to "revive detente" but to find ways of shaping a common European cooperation policy for all the 35 CSCE countries to overcome their common problems and to ensure progress in all those areas in East-West relations that are covered by the CSCE Final Act. This is why great significance attaches to the Third Follow-up Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which will begin in Vienna a year from now. The Vienna Meeting will take place during a particularly difficult phase in East-West relations and the CSCE process as a whole. Let us be frank: The tensions between the two military blocs, which have been mounting since the late 1970s, and the attitudes displayed by some states in domestic and international affairs have deprived the CSCE process of some of its dynamism. The repeated violation or non-respect of what has been agreed upon within the framework of CSCE has even caused some quarters to wonder whether the entire process is still meaningful.

Thus the question is: How can the Vienna Conference overcome these shortcomings, how can it revitalise the CSCE process? The answer appears to be simple, at least in formal terms: In order to be rated as a success the Meeting will have to cope as fully as possible with the task outlined for all follow-up meetings in the Final Act: A critical and business-like stocktaking and the successful negotiation of new measures designed to promote detente and to intensify cooperation in all areas.

The differences between East and West and in particular those coming to light in the interpretation and implementation of the Final Act may, of course, prevent the Vienna Meeting from taking such a picture-book course.

To be realistic we have to expect quite some difficulties for the Vienna Meeting. What is important, however, is that concrete results are achieved and that these results, though based on compromise, will contain concrete statements and agreements which will generally strengthen and stimulate the CSCE process. This will require the political will of all participating countries to continue the process jointly begun despite or, in fact, because of the differences that may exist.

What is necessary, therefore, is a constructive spirit furthering common efforts to reduce tension and enhance cooperation. What is also needed is a large measure of mutual tolerance and great efforts to gain a better understanding of the material constraints determining the attitudes of individual countries. However, tolerance should on no account mean turning a blind eye, for political expediency, on crass violations of rules of behaviour adopted by CSCE.

In our opinion the Vienna Meeting should not merely repeat or reformulate what was agreed in Helsinki and Madrid. Whatever is necessary for peaceful and good-neighbourly relations in Europe has already been stated in the Final Act. Now the time has come to translate all that into reality.

For obvious reasons there are many areas where this cannot be achieved immediately or directly. It is the object of the follow-up meetings to agree on measures by which a better implementation of the Final Act can be achieved - if necessary via a number of intermediate steps, with the help of catalysts and even by taking not-so-obvious detours.

It will, I think, be necessary to lead CSCE out of its more or less normative phase of the first ten years into a more operative phase. This does not necessarily mean that an organisation, secretariats, etc. have to be set up. It means a variety of measures that can be undertaken by the participating countries without an institutional framework and which would help to implement the aspirations expressed in the Final Act.

The Budapest Cultural Forum, which had been agreed in Madrid as an essential element of the continuation of the CSCE process on the road to Vienna, has just ended - unfortunately, despite intensive efforts on many

parts and especially on the part of the Austrian head of delegation - without adopting a final document. Nevertheless, we attach considerable importance to this first dialogue between leading representatives of cultural life of the 35 participating countries. In any event, the Cultural Forum has given rise to a number of concrete proposals which now ought to be evaluated and further pursued in Vienna.

Negotiations in Stockholm are only about to enter into a concrete phase. Another highly important meeting of experts also agreed upon in Madrid has not yet started but will take place only next spring: the Berne Meeting on Human Contacts.

I should now like to outline Austria's ideas about a few areas of the CSCE process, and I do not deny that in so doing I intend to provide some food for thought for the Vienna Follow-up Conference.

The first phase of the Stockholm Conference on Confidence and Security Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe (CDE) will be suspended as soon as the Vienna Follow-up Conference begins so that the progress achieved may be evaluated in Vienna in line with the Madrid mandate. The Vienna Follow-up Meeting will then discuss the transition to the second phase, which will be devoted to disarmament proper. This means that the Vienna Meeting will have to examine in detail the progress and results of the Stockholm Conference and to decide "where to go from here". If we extrapolate from the present state of affairs what appears to be achievable in Stockholm by autumn of 1986 we may forecast some positive, though perhaps modest, results, which might comprise a number of confidence and security-building measures and a politically binding reaffirmation of the renunciation of the use of force. We believe that on this basis the decision should be taken to continue the first phase of the CDE process after the end of the Vienna Conference and to broaden the mandate for Stockholm with a view to getting closer to phase II, i.e. disarmament measures in the proper sense of the term.

I am confident that the position paper submitted in Stockholm some two weeks ago by the neutral and non-aligned countries (N + N) may make a significant contribution to a successful and above all timely conclusion of the current Stockholm negotiations. The N + N document contains all the necessary elements: Notification and observation of military activities, development of a rapid communication network for an exchange of military information; limitation of military activities and reassertion of the principle of the renunciation of the use of force. All confidence-building measures should be made verifiable; it is particularly in this area that the neutral and non-aligned countries have introduced new ideas designed to make the thorny thicket of verification more passable.

It will be a most important task for the Vienna Meeting to discuss in the greatest possible detail the entire complex of the human dimension of the CSCE process (Human Rights and Basket III) and to evaluate developments in this area including the outcome of the meetings of experts held so far. On the basis of this analysis new measures should be agreed to ensure a more faithful implementation and respect of all relevant rules. Austria supports the French proposal to hold a special conference on questions of the reunification of families.

In this context I should like to say a word on the Conference on Human Rights held in Ottawa this spring. With many others I deplore the fact that this conference has not produced any concrete results in the sense of a final document. Still, it did provide a platform for a broad and frank discussion in which many participated. It proved impossible for individual countries to escape this discussion by alleging interference with their domestic affairs. As a result, the two sides quite openly reproached one another for disregarding civil and political rights on the one hand and social problems such as poverty and unemployment on the other.

All in all, the Ottawa Conference for the first time gave rise to what might be called a dialogue on this delicate subject matter - delicate because of its ideological implications. It is on this dialogue, on the fact that the parties were at least ready to talk to each other, that we may and, in fact, must base our future work, for at least one argument can no longer be credibly used after Ottawa: that a discussion of such matters would amount to interference with the domestic affairs of the other side.

The Vienna Follow-up Meeting will also have to focus on the Cultural Forum recently held in Budapest. The basic idea of this Forum was to provide a platform for a free and spontaneous exchange of views among personalities of cultural life from all CSCE countries on matters of cultural activities, the dissemination of cultural products, and cooperation in this field.

It was in particular thanks-to the outstanding hospitality and excellent organisation on the part of Hungary that this exchange of views did come about though it was less spontaneous an exchange than might have been hoped for. A surprisingly large number of ideas on how to promote a freer and more intensive cooperation in the cultural field were launched and cast in the form of concrete proposals.

Despite this highly positive outcome the Cultural Forum, however, failed to produce an unequivocal success such as the adoption of a final document would have constituted. A draft document prepared by the N + N countries and in large part formulated by the Austrian delegation was, in fact, placed before the Forum. It was couched in such language that the approval of many delegations from East and West appeared to be certain. That no consensus was achieved after all despite the great and highly appreciated efforts of the Austrian delegation was due, on the face of it, to the different ways in which East and West interpreted the concept of "freedom of culture".

Maximalist demands on the part of some western delegations and, to put it frankly, a lack of flexibility on the part of some eastern delegations prevented the adoption of a final report. As we see it, this fact detracts only slightly from the success of the Forum, which marks a new beginning in the cultural dialogue of Europe. As regards the CSCE process as a whole, however, the lack of a final report appears to be more serious a matter. It is to be feared that meetings of experts such as those in Ottawa and Budapest, which fail to produce a report to be submitted to the forthcoming Follow-up Meeting may prove detrimental to this Follow-up Meeting in that they raise some doubts about the usefulness of such meetings of experts.

It will be the task of the Vienna Meeting to evaluate the subject matter of the various interim meetings including the Forum, to analyse the course of events and also the reasons for the lack of full success and in this way to provide an answer to any such questions.

The outcome of the Cultural Forum has once again clearly shown that the Vienna CSCE Meeting will have to deal with highly significant questions concerning multilateral cooperation between East and West. Accordingly, the Vienna Meeting will have to concentrate on much more searching questions about the future of the CSCE process than have been asked in the past.

Personally, I would consider one area to be particularly important for the Vienna Meeting: Economic, scientific, technological and ecological cooperation, i.e. the subjects of Basket II, which have been somewhat neglected by the meetings held between Madrid and Vienna. This neglect will have to be compensated for especially as these important and constantly evolving sectors hold a most valuable potential for all-European cooperation. Here, too, the operative element should be in the foreground.

Thus, concrete cooperation should be agreed upon in various areas of environmental protection, transport and the dismantling of barriers to trade. In order to stimulate the exchange of goods, for example, a special seminar or symposium, or an economic forum modelled after the Budapest Cultural Forum might be held with the participation not only of government representatives but also of business managers, i.e. experts with practical experience. Another subject that has recently been somewhat neglected is that of the exchange of information. The Vienna Meeting ought to pay more attention to this question which, like the question of human rights, is ideologically loaded.

The Vienna Follow-up Meeting will also have to adopt measures to ensure the continued functioning of the follow-up mechanism. Not only will it have to decide upon a further follow-up meeting, it will also have to lay down a programme of work for the period up to that 4th follow-up meeting. One question that will merit particular attention - and one for which Austria can not yet offer a tailor-made solution - is whether the current structure of the follow-up programme with meetings of experts and seminars of government representatives should be retained or whether also new forms would have to be sought.

Thus, there will be ample subject matter to be discussed at the Vienna CSCE Follow-up Meeting. Nobody can say today what course the negotiations will take. The favourable outcome of the US-Soviet summit in Geneva has changed the East-West barometer to “variable to fine”, and the CSCE process ought to benefit from this development. In any case, Austria will endeavour to be a perfect host. We consider it a central political task to help ensure first and foremost that peace is maintained in Europe, and the CSCE process is a most important means to this end.

All countries should recall the underlying principles of the CSCE process. As I have pointed out the intention is to talk about what has not yet been fulfilled, what has not yet been achieved. But if you compare the present situation with the political history of Europe throughout the last few centuries you will see that - most gratifyingly for a European - Europe is no longer mentioned nowadays when reference is made to the world's trouble spots. Ten years ago, Helsinki did not raise a claim to the achievement of Utopia. In actual fact the 35 participating countries most realistically recognised the mutual advantages to be derived from dialogue and cooperation rather than confrontation and started a process designed to lead to a genuine order of peace in Europe.

This process, quite naturally, has required the countries concerned to be ready to modify their stand to some extent:

It has required the insight that all countries have an equal claim to security and that no country may demand or expect a higher status of security than others.

It has required an understanding that relations among the states can be improved on a permanent basis only if the wellbeing of the individual human being is taken care of.

It requires the political will to move from mere coexistence to genuine cooperation in the greatest possible number of fields.

This process must continue and it will continue because there is no alternative in the interest of the people of our continent. We shall do whatever we can to achieve this goal especially in the context of the forthcoming CSCE Conference in Vienna.