

Preface

In the autumn of 2003, the Presidium of the Austrian Academy of Sciences entrusted the Historical Commission with organizing an international conference commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Austrian State Treaty on 15 May 1955. The goal of the conference was not to be “self-adulatory,” as an article in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* on 10 November 2004 suggested might be the case for various events planned for the jubilee in our “spectacle-loving” country. The goal of the conference was rather to take a new, international look at and reflect upon the most important state document of the Second Republic, which the foreign ministers of the Soviet Union, Great Britain, the United States of America, France, and Austria signed after nine years of negotiations.

Fifty historians, specialists in international law, political scientists, and diplomats from the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States of America, and Austria were invited. They included retired State Secretary Ludwig Steiner, who in 1955 served Austrian Federal Chancellor Julius Raab as secretary, and Ambassador Rostislav Sergeev, the Soviet delegation’s translator at the time, as contemporary witnesses of the event. In the framework of the conference, which took place from 8 to 11 May 2005 at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, participants addressed the following problems respecting the origins, the implementation, and the consequences of the State Treaty:

- the realization of the Treaty in the context of the greater flexibility of Great-Power politics following the election of President Eisenhower, the death of Stalin, and the end of the Korean War, but also at a time that saw the consolidation of the military blocs, the admission of the Federal Republic of Germany to NATO, and the establishment of the Warsaw Pact;
- the Austrian factor in the “militarization” of the Cold War including the increasing atomic threat, for Austria as well;
- the problem of the linkage between the German and Austrian questions and their de-coupling by the USSR in the spring of 1955;
- the background of the opening of a “window of opportunity” in Soviet foreign policy in 1955;
- the significance of Austrian neutrality on the Swiss model for ending the East-West occupation of Austria as well as the position of the Soviet Union and the Western powers at the conclusion of the State Treaty;

- the perception of Austria’s international position and of the Soviet initiative on Austria in the spring of 1955 in the chancelleries and foreign ministries of other European states (Finland, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Yugoslavia);
- the responsibility of Austria and of the Austrians for having taken part in Hitler’s war against the Allied and Associated powers and the elimination of the clause of responsibility from the preamble of the State Treaty;
- the implementation of the provisions of the State Treaty, especially transfer payments for the so-called “German property”, the return of property to and compensation for the victims of Nazi crimes, the repatriation of prisoners-of-war and civilian internees, as well as the protection of ethnic minorities;
- the place of the State Treaty in international law in view of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the declaration of several Treaty articles as obsolete, and the progressive integration of Austria into the European Union;
- last but not least, the importance of the State Treaty and neutrality in the history of Austrian identity.

This volume presents the conference results to the public. Today, firmer judgments are more possible than they were at the commemorative conference in 1980 at the Viennese Hofburg for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the State Treaty. At that time, the Soviet participants saw the State Treaty primarily as a step toward the Helsinki Conference of 1975, while a British speaker expressed doubt about the significance of the neutrality-question for the conclusion of the Treaty. A former US diplomat pointed up the dangers of a division of Austria in March 1955 and a French professor emphasized the importance of the replacement of the leaderships in Moscow and Washington. Nowadays, after the collapse of the communist bloc, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, a greater range of archival sources in both East and West is available. Many previously unknown documents have thus become known that shed new light on the context of the State Treaty and that make possible new judgments. A particular goal of this volume is to integrate the State Treaty more completely into the historiography of international strategy and national identity. The essays reflect exclusively the opinions of their authors.

For support in the organization of the conference and in the publication of the volume, the editors would like to express special thanks – also in the name of the Historical Commission of the Austrian Academy of Sciences – to State Secretary Franz Morak for his kind support and for opening the conference; and to the President of the Austrian Academy of Sciences Prof. Herbert Mang, Vice President Prof. Herbert Matis, and Secretary-General

Prof. Herwig Friesinger for their energetic promotion of the conference and the publication; Elisabeth Wegmann in the office of the Presidium and Lisbeth Triska of the Philosophical-Historical Class for their assistance; Mag. Bernhard Plunger and Susanne Slovatsek of the Department for Foreign Exchange of the Austrian Academy of Sciences for managing travel arrangements; the Department of Public Relations of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and particularly Dr. Marianne Baumgart for handling contacts with the media; the Office for Events-Management of the Austrian Academy of Sciences with Dr. Martina Milletich for the smooth running of conference-functions in the buildings of the Academy; the technical staff of the Academy with Mr. Kornhäusel for recording the entire conference, especially the discussions of contemporary witnesses of the State Treaty; Mag. Julia Czarnowski for the production of the manuscript; Dr. William D. Godsey, Jr., Mag. Barbara Haider-Wilson, Dr. Hans Peter Hye, Dr. Jan Paul Niederkorn, Dr. Karin Schneider, and Dr. Edward Wilson for translations and for editing the contributions; Daniela Huber for clerical work; Marianne Grattenthaler for preparing the index; Professors Fritz Fellner, Hermann Hunger and Helmut Rumpler for the valuable recommendations and help they provided in their expert opinions on the manuscript; Hannes Weinberger from the Publishing House of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and Franz Weitzer for the quick publication. Special thanks go as well to the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the City of Vienna for financing this volume.

Vienna, in June 2005

The Editors