

Occupation and Independence: The Austrian Second Republic, 1945-1963



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Date Range: 1945-1963

Size: Approx. 71,000 pages

Source Library: U.S. National Archives



Description

On April 27, 1945, the provisional government issued a decree nullifying the Anschluss and reestablishing an independent, democratic Republic of Austria under the 1920 constitution as amended in 1929. The country was occupied by the Allies on May 9, 1945 and under the Allied Commission for Austria established by an agreement on July 4, 1945, it was divided into Zones occupied respectively by American, British, French and Soviet Army personnel, with Vienna being also divided similarly into four sectors.

Though under occupation, this Austrian government was officially permitted to conduct foreign relations with the approval of the Four Occupying Powers under the agreement of June 28, 1946. As part of this trend, Austria was one of the founding members of the Danube Commission formed on August 18, 1948. Austria would benefit from the Marshall Plan but economic recovery was very slow as a result of its 10-year political overseeing by the Allied Powers.

The two largest leading parties, the Christian-conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) remained in a coalition led by the ÖVP until the mid-1960s. The two major parties strove towards ending allied occupation and restoring a fully independent Austria. The Austrian State Treaty was signed on May 15, 1955. Upon the termination of allied occupation, Austria was proclaimed a neutral country, and "everlasting" neutrality was incorporated into the Constitution on October 26, 1955.

When Austria adopted a policy of neutrality in 1955, its leaders made it clear that political neutrality did not mean moral neutrality. Austrian sympathies clearly lay with the Western democracies, an attitude that was reinforced by its opposition to the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. Nonetheless, Austria attempted to cultivate good relations with the Soviet bloc countries, which accounted for about one-sixth of Austrian exports by the early-1960s.

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