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NOVEMBER 12, 1974

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF TOASTS  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
BRUNO KREISKY  
FEDERAL CHANCELLOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA

THE STATE FLOOR

10:02 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Chancellor and distinguished guests:

It is a great privilege to honor you in the White House on this occasion. As I look around the room, I see many, many people that I know from personal experience, including Mrs. Ford and myself, who have visited Austria and been the beneficiaries of the wonderful hospitality, the warmth, the friendship of the many, many fine Austrians who have bent over backwards to make us from America warmly welcome.

I must say to you, Mr. Chancellor, that sometime -- I can't give you the date -- but I am going to wander into Austria and take advantage of those wonderful Tyrolean Alps, because I do like to ski, and hopefully I will have an opportunity to do so just to not only enjoy the benefits of the mountains, but the benefit of the wonderful people from your country.

There are many, Mr. Chancellor, who pass judgment on a country by its size and geography and its size in population. I don't think those are the most significant ways on which you really can judge a people or a country, and we recognize, of course, that Austria is relatively small in population and relatively small in geography, but as we look at the great history at the present in Austria, we find that looking from the outside to the country that you have a great humanitarian spirit, you have a great belief in friendship, but more importantly than almost anything, the people of Austria have a character.

And that is how we judge, in my opinion, the strength of a nation, despite its size either geographically or population-wise.

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We know over the years since the end of the decade of the forties that Austria has contributed very significantly, despite many problems. You have contributed in the Middle East, and Cyprus, and we commend you and we thank you for these efforts that have helped to preserve the peace and to build for it in the future.

I would simply like to express on behalf of all of us in the United States our gratitude for the friendship that we have with the people of Austria, the gratitude that we have for the actions of your government, and we look forward, I can say, Mr. Chancellor, without any reservation or qualification, the opportunity to work with you and the people of your country in the years ahead.

It is an enduring friendship predicated on a firm foundation of people to people and government to government, and may I ask all of our distinguished guests here tonight to join me in a toast to Dr. Bruno Kreisky, the Chancellor of the Republic of Austria.

CHANCELLOR KREISKY: Mr. President, Mrs. Ford, ladies and gentlemen:

In your warm words of welcome, Mr. President, for which I sincerely thank you, you have mentioned the longstanding and proven ties between the United States and Austria. Certainly the peoples of the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy always harbored feelings of genuine friendship and admiration for the American people.

To the best of my recollection, however, the relations between the two governments were not always quite that cordial. (Laughter)

It appears that His Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty Franz Joseph could not bring himself for a long time to receive the American envoy to Vienna.

Early in this century the developing official relations between Austria and Hungary and the United States of America, at least until the outbreak of World War I and the ensuing disintegration of the Austro monarchy, there really never was more than correct relations and, therefore completely different from those we are fortunate to enjoy today.

Why do I choose to point this out? Because the development of our relations serves as a most convincing example, which shows that a very special and close relationship between two nations can be developed in quite a few decades.

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I see three reasons for this. In 1945 the United States became one of the four occupation powers in Austria and helped us from the very first day to lay all those foundations needed for the restoration of democracy. Nothing has made a greater contribution to the history of our democracy than the presence of the United States in Austria. You virtually were the guardian of our freedom, Mr. President.

Secondly, Austria was in ruins and it was hard to imagine at that time how our State could ever again become the home and heaven of our people. You gave to those of us who set out to clear the ruins not only a healthy dose of American optimism, but also the most generous material assistance.

Mr. President, I hope you will have the opportunity to see with your own eyes the fruits which have sprung from your country's contributions to the economic revival of Austria.

Aid under the Marshal Plan was the foundation of our economic prosperity and its effects are still being felt today. This aid constitutes one of the chief reasons why twice as many people than in 1937 earn a good living in Austria today.

During the period from 1937 to 1970, our Gross National Product, given constant rises, quadrupled, and has shown a marked increase since.

Let me add that your material assistance of that time still keeps giving today, as many Austrian firms receive lower interest, long-term investment loans from the ERP counterpart front, which is sustained through repayment of earlier loans.

The fact that this aid by the United States for the restoration of our economy was given to us free of any contingencies of political dogma enabled us to utilize those sums, which appeared gigantic to us in the light of our circumstance, and complete independence.

And finally, the third reason. Through generous grants, Austrian scientists, engineers and experts of every specialty have been afforded the opportunity to explore new dimensions in the advanced areas of your cultural and scientific life.

A further example is the considerable contribution made by the Ford Foundation to the Institute for Advanced Studies in Vienna from which a great number of eminent social scientists have emerged in recent years. This constitutes ample reward for the contributions made by Austria to the cultural life of the United States.

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Before raising my glass to the continued prospering of these relations, I would like to again voice my regret that Mrs. Kreisky was unable, for reasons of health, to participate in this beautiful and impressive visit. She regretted this all the more because it robbed her of the opportunity to meet Mrs. Ford, whose restoration to health has made us all very happy and to whom I wish to extend warm personal wishes.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, I ask you to raise your glasses and join me in a toast to the health of the President of the United States and his charming wife, and to the continued development of the excellent relations between our two countries.

END (AT 10:14 P.M. EST)