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Mudear Ivone,

The French High Commissioner has been away until recently and I have only just paid my first call on him. He kept me for nearly two hours and, as might be expected, expatiated on the dangers to western interests of a treaty on the present terms.

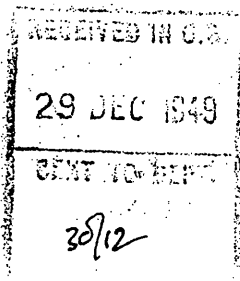
He did not rate as particularly high the immediate risks of a putsch in the days after the withdrawal of our troops. It looks, therefore, as if he may be going to be less obstinate and tiresome than Keyes on the gendarmerie-army issue. On present form, Galloway in fact doubts whether Keyes will play, short of a direct order from Washington. He will speak to you about this on his return and meanwhile has been doing his best to knock some sense into his colleagues and into the Austrians.

On the longer term risks Béthouart went over the economic and political weaknesses in the Austrian set-up as they would be under a treaty. Taken individually he did not think that these weaknesses would necessarily add up to an irresistible threat to Austrian survival. It would be up to the Austrians.

And there, as Béthouart sees it, is the rub. They are, he said, a female race and they are ready to be violated. Last time it was the Germans. The next time it may be the Russians. They are not only female, he went on, but in many ways oriental in their fatalism and readiness to accept what they feel is an irresistible force.

There is nothing novel in all this and I would hardly have worried you with it were it not for the specific that Béthouart proposed. What, he said, do you do if you want to make a rape more difficult? You keep the woman under constant observation and never allow her alone with her intending despoiler. So, immediately after the implementation of the Treaty, the Austrians should be brought into the Council of Europe and as soon as possible thereafter the permanent seat of the Council should/

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should be moved to Vienna. That would make the Austrians and Russians behave more cautiously. At any rate, the main Austrian political parties might hesitate to repeat the follies of the years between the wars and destroy Austria in their battles with each other. It might also make the Russians risk less.

What is more, like the best kind of defensive, it would have an element of offensive. For Vienna was still the natural capital of the Danube and a large section of the people in Prague, Budapest and Belgrade continued to look towards her.

I asked Béthouart if he had put this idea to anyone. He said that he had suggested it to Schuman; but Schuman came from Lorraine and could think of no other place than Strasbourg. And, said Béthouart, it would be fatal for the prospects of the Treaty and Russian withdrawal if anyone should breathe a word of this before the last Russian soldier had left.

It may be quite impossible to take this suggestion up at that time for other reasons. But I thought that the idea was worth putting to you as Béthouart has already mooted it on his side. What is more, it certainly has the merit of not over-estimating the Austrians or their capacity to change themselves. Is there any chance of this ever being practicable? Or for any variant of the same idea?

Meanwhile we are trying to organise here that we, the Americans and, if possible, the French should prepare a balanced joint study of what we think the dangers to Austria will be if the Treaty comes into force on the present terms. For I think that there would be some advantage if London, Washington and Paris had at least something like a common appreciation from the spot of how it strikes those concerned in Vienna.

I am also writing separately to Ivo Mallet to ask him whether he thinks there is any more we can do here tripartitely which will help him before and after January 9th, when the Treaty discussions start again.

Yours ever

Harold Caccia