



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Farewell

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 15, 2009

Comments in response to farewell remarks by Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to OSCE, H.S.H. Maria-Pia Kothbauer, on behalf of Permanent Council members.

Who in the world were you talking about?

It has been a vacation.

My mother and my two grandmothers always tried to impress upon me that a lady never hurries, she glides. Just like Maria-Pia. Her mind even glides. She never bursts out with a thought like I do. She thinks about the idea, ponders and then it glides out. My dear, you are a prize winning rose in a garden of considerable variety and excellence. Thank you very much for what you said.

Well, it is time to go home and unpack and do some laundry but I can assure you, the laundry these days can be done very quickly so it will be time to repack and set out again. To me there is just not much more fun than multilateral work. But this size and range of real estate is just about it for me. I have no idea whether or not I have done an even mediocre job. Whatever I have done could not have been done without the exceptional support of those in the U.S. mission. People seem to come and go but the quality remains.

I have great admiration for the way the Secretariat keeps its cool. It cannot be an easy sail on a gentle and rippling sea to handle 56 quite independent thinking states. Let alone go through the annual reweaving with a new Chairperson in Office to create yet another positive and healthy working relationship. I congratulate you for the way you manage it, Mr. Secretary General.

I have gone through and run over three and a quarter Chairmen in Office, not the Foreign Ministers but the Ambassadors here charged with the day to day running of the OSCE. Those good men, Lenarcic, De Crombrugge, De Boado and Turunen, I suspect would testify that I have used the correct expression of the experience. But they have all bopped me down as appropriate, not being in the least intimidated. And they have always allowed me to rise in defense of the beliefs of my country. They have listened with immeasurable

patience as I often pick away at a position that seems to me either wrong-headed or simply not well enough thought out.

This opportunity to pick away, argue, discuss out in the open is to me a major value of this organization. I don't think all our missions are as strong as they could or should be. Obviously we aren't getting an A for preventing conflicts. People continue to be trafficked and, in my view, societies that wink at trafficking, shrug shoulders and allow such moral corruption to run amok do not belong on the list of those who are civilized.

We should certainly continue the Model OSCE. We should certainly have a legal personality. We should certainly have stepped up to the plate and committed to operating in Afghanistan itself. Live a little! Carpe diem! Explore the idea of partnerships with Libya, Lebanon and Syria. Get a little imagination! And an organization that puts so much deserved emphasis on freedom of the media certainly ought to allow pool reporters into the PC proceedings. Lord knows it is sometimes difficult to be hung up on some issues appropriate to the discussion in the OSCE that in the larger picture have such a small place. But here we are supposed to be able to share our thoughts, for better or worse, larger or smaller. You who have been here awhile are surely familiar with my personal frustration with the choke-hold on EU members that exists. I would still like to hear individual wisdom unfiltered. I wish I had belonged to that famous coffee club out in the cafeteria. Maybe it was because I drink hot chocolate. But I know those guys. They came from smaller countries, small that is in hectares but no smaller than any other in brains and thought. I would like to see more diverse sources of wisdom drawn on from around this table.

Now, about democracy and freedom. It has been observed that I feel strongly about democracy and human rights. Nothing could make me argue that. I am definitely not a historian, but I can read and watch the news. You don't see too much coverage of demonstrations where crowds are shouting "give us tyranny or give us death" or "give us oppression!" or better yet "we want a dictator, we want a dictator!" Human beings cannot truly breathe without liberty. I believe that in the deepest of their hearts all people know that. I believe that those of us who are blessed to live free have a responsibility to support those, not impose upon, but support those who seek such freedom. The lessons learned around this table should be useful to everyone.

Now I have quite mixed emotions about the host country. Austria continues to be very generous to the OSCE. For that I, along with everyone, and most certainly the United States, thanks Austria no end. But the "schlag" and the Lilliputian chocolates have overwhelmed me. I think the point with the chocolates was to eat one and not a handful! I surrendered about two years ago. And being in a world where personal responsibility remains mostly hidden, I have emailed my trainer in Washington that "Vienna made me do it". He will need to make me undo it. I have loved every spoon and handful! Where is the Austrian Ambassador? Thank you.

And there is one group here in the Hofburg that I could definitely not have survived without. The interpreters. They have bounced along with my adlibs without, to my knowledge, a murmur. They have had any number of challenges. I recall, for example, upon returning from my first trip to Kazakhstan, I commented in this hall that my socks had been knocked off. There was, briefly, an understanding that I had been knocked up. Which at my age would have been either very flattering or something for the tabloids or both. I cannot begin to find adequate words to thank you, each of you, and as well for the opportunity to listen to translation into Italian.

Eh bien! You all are going to have a very, very interesting time ahead. I wish you all very well and thank you all for your advice, counsel and friendships. But above all, I wish this organization well. It deserves it. In a world of confused consciences, the OSCE should always be the good one.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson, and thank you all.