

Through the Eyes of Youth – 175 Years of Austrian – American Diplomatic Relations

I am a laptop, new, shiny, and US-made. I crossed the Atlantic Ocean and after only a few weeks I landed in my new home: destiny (or actually Hewlett-Packard) chose to send me to Vienna, Austria. Most likely, the short journey was caused by the absence of trade barriers, or so the cell phone, which was packed next to me, told me. He had heard workers, while in storage, talking about how easy it was for the US to exploit export opportunities in Austria. The cell phone also mentioned that people in Austria, especially youth, absolutely adore American products. My curiosity was inflamed. Would I soon be the beloved gadget of an Austrian teenager?

So, there I was, excited and nervous, waiting in an Austrian department store for my new owner. I wondered whether the phone was right about Austrians loving American goods. One day, a young boy in his mid-teens, was looking at various laptops. 'Pick me, pick me', I wanted to scream. My hard drive started to make funny noises (it always does, when I get excited). "What about this one?" he shouted. "What is it love?" an old lady said. "This one isn't so expensive." He was pointing at me. My hard drive was about to burst. "Oh, an American one? That's nice. I am sure." She paused. "Did I tell you, that when I was your age, the Americans were here and implemented the Marshall plan? Saved us, I dare tell you." – "Yes, yes, grandma, you did. But what do you think?" – "I am sure it is a good computer. Oh, and in 1961 Kennedy and Khrushchev met here in Vienna. We were always at good relations with all sides." – "Grandma, I know. But would you buy me this one for my birthday?" – "You children hardly ever think about these things anymore" his grandmother scolded. "Grandma, I do think that all these past events are interesting and American-Austrian relations have been exemplary since the Second World War. But for me, the fact that I can buy almost any American product here in Austria is far more fascinating." His grandmother sighed. "It is also more important for me to know that there are no barriers for Austrians to enter the USA. I might be able to go to college there or even work there. I know there is more to international relations, but these are the aspects that affect me most." – "I understand love, but don't forget those other facets of diplomatic relations. They're still important." The boy shrugged. "Alright, let's get you this computer then." The boy hugged her with exuberant enthusiasm.

My hard drive was only starting to calm down then. However, I thought about what the boy had said. Historical aspects of his country's relations did not count as much, as bilateral economic ones. I hope the absence of barriers between Austria and America will be maintained, so more of my laptop colleagues can come and have a happy life, just like I do now.