

**“He’ll become an antisemite here anyway.”
Israel as Seen by Karl Hartl, the First Austrian Diplomat
in Tel Aviv (1950–55)**

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Abstract

The Austrian government recognized the state of Israel de facto on March 15, 1949. A year later Austria’s first diplomatic representative arrives in Tel Aviv: Consul First Class Karl Hartl, born in 1909 in Vienna and married to Franziska Grünhut, a Jewish physician. He was a socialist and during the war had been active in the French resistance. In his reports he describes and analyzes nearly all aspects of the political, social, and economic life in Israel and the relations with Austria. The longer he is in Israel the sharper is his criticism of the young state, in his opinion an “artificial state,” which has a border “that sweats blood.” He is convinced that Israel has to be content with “what it really is – a small, very poor country. And only peace with the Arabs will lead to this meager halfway-secure existence.” With respect to the Arabs, Israel has reformulated the old law of the desert: “No longer a tooth for a tooth, but a whole set of teeth for a tooth.” By the time Hartl left Israel in 1955 he called himself an antisemite.

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Introduction

On May 18, 1948, four days after the founding of Israel, the Austrian legation in Cairo reported about the reaction to the recognition of the new state by the United States. The fact that this recognition “took place just eleven minutes after the proclamation of the Jewish state and without the prior notification of the Arab states” and that they learned of it, so to speak, “from the newspaper” then “gave rise to great astonishment and broad reaching disapproval” and would be seen as extremely unfriendly conduct by the USA

toward the Arab states.”¹ At that time, the opinion existed in some military circles of the UN that Israel would not be a match for the Arab pressure and that the Arab states would be able to take control of all of Palestine.² Even the British foreign minister, Ernest Bevin, was convinced “that the Jewish state could not hold out and that the Zionist dream would be over.” For him, the American policy toward Israel was “pure domestic fodder for the elections.”³

In the Vatican, Israel was viewed as a fundamental problem. A “solution of the Jewish question” through the new creation of a Jewish state in Palestine “with Jews who were transplanted there” was viewed as a flawed in its fundamental principles:

“...since in view of the circumstance that there is not an autochthonous Jewish population in Palestine, what is dealt with here is the formation of a new state on a purely racial basis which, after the defeat of Hitlerism, was already believed to have been overcome. With this solution, unfavorable repercussions are also foreseen for world Jewry which, as a result of the new founding that was fomented by it, would end up in a divided position that could lead to the fact that Jews who remained in their native countries could be perceived in them more or less as foreigners who could no longer be relied upon under all circumstances.”⁴

Additional reports from the Vatican painted a depressing picture of the situation in Israel and the future of the holy places in Jerusalem.⁵ According to the Austrian Foreign Ministry on May 4, 1948, in view of the events and the necessity for the protection of Austrian interests and Austrian citizens, the appointment of an Austrian representative in Palestine could indeed “appear urgent” but, as it went on to state, that would “hardly be implementable under the current unclear relations.”⁶

In the meeting of the Council of Ministers on May 18, Austrian Chancellor Leopold Figl informed his cabinet colleagues in a terse sentence that “the new State of Israel has been founded” and that furthermore, “You have of course been informed about the state of war there through the newspapers.” There was nothing to be discerned regarding the recognition of this new state. Two days later, the word was that the “new Jewish postal system” accepted and delivered Austrian letters. Although a recognition of this action

¹ May 18, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 44.

² May 16, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 42.

³ May 27, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 50.

⁴ May 20, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 48.

⁵ See in particular December 6, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 78. January 7, 1949; Doc. 85. And May 14, 1949, Doc. 102.

⁶ May 4, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 37.

was only classified as a matter of secondary significance, Austria would, as was stated, “in any case be committed to a certain extent.” But that was precisely what was not wanted under any circumstances. As was also stated, Israel would have to apply for recognition. Such an application had not yet been presented, and Austria “had no interest in acting prematurely on its own on such a request in any form.”⁷

In the meantime, the course of the war led the Arabs to the painful conclusion, as was formulated by an Arab diplomat to the Austrian representative Clemens Wildner in Ankara, that the Jews “(could) militarily do whatever they wanted.” There was no one who could stop the Israeli army “from marching as far as Cairo, Beirut, or Damascus.” The only remaining problem, though, was Israel. In August 1948, the Iraqi envoy had already told Wildner that he could not imagine any solution to the problem. The establishment of a Jewish state would never be recognized by the Arabs. There would just be a latent state of war in this region, comparable with the era of the Crusades.⁸

For some diplomatic observers, Israel continued to be regarded as a trouble spot. A hundred thousand Jews had emigrated from the Eastern Bloc, “trained Communists,” in Clemens Wildner’s opinion. They would seize the leadership, and Palestine would then “sooner or later [become] a communist state.” Again and again, the fear of a “Bolshevization of the Jewish state” was expressed. It would no doubt turn into a “state with communist leanings.” In the Vatican, it was stressed that the positive outcome of the war had “triggered a wave of nationalism and racial hatred” among the Jews.⁹ The events themselves “were reminiscent of the expulsion of the Armenians in the last World War and of the atrocities carried out during and after the Second World War.”¹⁰ In the situation report from Cairo on January 25, 1949, the Austrian diplomat Ludwig Blaas concluded:

“The situation in the Middle East continues to be muddled and murky. However, two elements characterize the situation: the fear of penetration by Russia into the Middle East along with the increase in the power struggle associated with it, and the struggle for the petroleum.”¹¹

With a view toward Austria, it was already suggested at that time which topics were to be determined the following years. On July 29, 1948, a representative of the Vöslau Worsted Wool Mill by the name of Reuter who had left Tel Aviv on May 14 reported on

⁷ May 20, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 47.

⁸ August 16, 1948 and December 27, 1948, Doc. 63 and 84.

⁹ May 14, 1949, Volume 1, Doc. 102.

¹⁰ December 6, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 78.

¹¹ January 25, 1949, Volume 1, Doc. 90.

the “extraordinarily poor opinion of Austria with the Jews of Palestine.” The view had circulated that “at the time of the Nazi occupation, the Austrians had behaved the worst against Jews” and “the return of Jewish assets was being thwarted in Austria.” A shop in Jerusalem that had displayed goods with the mark “Made in Austria” had been set ablaze overnight.¹² The Austrian government did not act; for the time being the further course of events was awaited.

Israel, though, began to act. In early September of 1948, Foreign Minister Moshe Shertok dispatched Daniel Kurt Lewin, who had emigrated from Germany to Palestine, as an *agent consulaire* to Austria where, in the Foreign Ministry, it was immediately made clear to him that he could not be recognized in this office, “since such an agent would be appointed by a consul general of his state, but the State of Israel has not yet been recognized by Austria.” Levin then carried out his duties in an unofficial capacity on the Getreidegasse in Salzburg. He was officially recognized by the US occupation power and authorized to issue visas to Jewish DPs.¹³

It was only on March 15, 1949 that the Council of Ministers decided to grant Israel de facto recognition and to authorize Chancellor Figl to inform Lewin of this decision. The minutes of that meeting are quite informative:

“The chancellor read a report about the recognition of Israel. The USA and the USSR have already granted recognition. I believe that we must grant Israel de facto recognition. Dr. Kurt Lewin, Israel’s representative, would be the first one to be informed of this. Diplomatic and consular relations may then be established, for which the groundwork must of course be laid. I believe that as the last state, we must grant recognition. We do not need the Allied Council to do so.¹⁴ After that comes the possible additional procedure for de jure recognition.”

Interior Minister Oskar Helmer¹⁵ stated:

“To my knowledge, Dr. Seidmann is the representative of the Austrian government in Tel Aviv. It is also necessary to comment upon this, particularly since he is even in possession of an official Austrian stamp and apparently holds a post as a representative. Dr. Lewin is also Israel’s representative to Switzerland and Prague. It is necessary to speak with him about the different demands, among which is a demand for 25 million

¹² July 29, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 61.

¹³ June 29, 1948 and September 7, 1948, Volume 1, Doc. 59 and 65.

¹⁴ Article 7 of the 2nd Control Agreement of June 28, 1946 established the rights of the Allies such that “the establishment of diplomatic and consular relations with other governments [that is, those that did not belong to the UN] required the prior consent of the Allied Council.” The admission of Israel to the UN took place on May 11, 1949.

¹⁵ Born in Tattendorf, November 16, 1887; died in Oberwaltersdorf, February 13, 1963.

schillings. We certainly need to know who really holds the post. A certain Bronislav Teichholz¹⁶ is also passing himself off as the official representative of Israel. There can, however, only be one official representative.”¹⁷

The minutes of the meeting (point 2) state:

“In its meeting of March 15, 1949, after a report by the chancellor on behalf of the foreign minister, Zl. 74.793-Prot./49, the Council of Ministers has decided to grant Israel *de facto* recognition and to authorize the chancellor to inform the unofficial representative of Israel in Salzburg, Kurt Lewin, of this decision and, upon obtaining Israel’s assent, to initiate the necessary steps in order to establish diplomatic and consular relations with Israel.”¹⁸

Foreign Minister Karl Gruber informed his Israeli colleague Moshe Sharett¹⁹ of the *de facto* recognition of the State of Israel by telegram on April 11, 1949 with the following words:

“I am pleased to be able to inform Your Excellency that the Austrian federal government has granted *de facto* recognition to the State of Israel. On this occasion, I would also like to express the hope that it will soon be possible to establish relations between our countries.”²⁰

Vienna took more time. Several more months were to pass until the confusion mentioned by Oskar Helmer in the meeting of the Council of Ministers on March 15, 1949 – as to who represented whom and where – would be cleared up. In early 1950, Foreign Minister Gruber finally began to act and brought to a close the interim status with regard to Israel. Outside of the agenda, the Council of Ministers agreed on January 10, 1950 to his request to establish a consulate general in Tel Aviv:

“...in view of the economic possibilities that appear to be present for Austria in Israel and of the sizable Austrian colony living there, as well as the need of Austrian citizens for

¹⁶ B. Teichholz-Werber, born in Rzeszow (Galicia) on February 10, 1904, had been director since October 1945 of the Displaced Persons camp that was housed in the half-destroyed Rothschild Hospital on Währinger Gürtel (the modern-day location of a branch of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce).

¹⁷ Minutes of the Council of Ministers, 149th meeting of the Council of Ministers, p. 2, point e).

¹⁸ Minutes of the Council of Ministers, transcript n. 149 on the meeting of the Council of Ministers on March 15, 1949.

¹⁹ Moshe Sharett was originally named Moshe Shertok (see also Volume 1, Facsimile no. 13). Shertok was a Polish name. In the wake of the Hebrewization of names after the founding of the State of Israel, Shertok – who was himself a convinced Hebrewist – changed his name to Moshe Sharett.

²⁰ See April 8, 1949 and April 18, 1949, Volume 1, Doc. 97, 98, and 99.

legal aid and legal protection in Israel, which has grown in recent years through increased emigration.”

The Council of Ministers also agreed that “the Austrian president would be approached with regard to the establishment of an Austrian consulate general in Tel Aviv and the entrusting of its leadership to the Consul First Class Karl Hartl.” Hartl had already “thoroughly proven himself as an official with the Austrian legations in Paris and Rome as well as his activity this year” and therefore appeared to be “best suited” for the post that was under consideration.²¹

Karl Hartl and the Consulate General

Consul First Class Karl Hartl, a business school graduate, arrived in Tel Aviv on January 31, 1950, and experienced what was claimed to be the first snowfall there since the founding of the city in 1909. Hartl was an extraordinary personality. He was born in Vienna on June 30, 1909, attended a letters and sciences high school, studied at the *Hochschule für Welthandel* (the College of World Trade) in Vienna, completed his diploma as a business graduate in 1933, and then went on to study law, philosophy, history, geography, and political science at the University of Vienna. Up until 1933 he was Roman Catholic; after that, he was unaffiliated. In 1936 he married Franziska Grünhut, a Jewish physician, and in 1937 their only child, a daughter named Anna Johanna, was born.

Hartl was a socialist and a member of the *Republikanischer Schutzbund* (the Republican Defense League). Because of participation in the February Uprising of 1934, he lost his job as the “director of propaganda” with the *Österreichische Soya-Vertriebsgesellschaft* (the Austrian Soy Marketing Company). He then went on to write several books (including *Wie, wann, wo? Technologie für Kinder* [*How, When, Where? Technology for Children*] in 1935 and *Warum, wozu? Nationalökonomie für Kinder* [*Why, What For? Economics for Children*] in 1936, the latter of which went through several printings and was translated into various other languages), and from 1936 to 1938 he was the Vienna contact person for the Spanish Republican embassy in Prague. After the Anschluss in 1938, he fled to Paris where he worked at the Spanish Republican diplomatic mission as economic adviser for Central Europe. After the war broke out, he was prominently active in the resistance and an employee of the *Office Autrichien* and the *Service National Autrichien* as well as of an action committee for the liberation of Austria. From September 1939 to May 1940, he was an employee of the French broadcasting service (“mobilized at the special order of the French prime minister; assigned to radio propaganda”) and the “Austrian Freedom Broadcaster” in Fécamb.

²¹ Minutes of the Council of Ministers, transcript n. 188 on the meeting of the Council of Ministers on January 10, 1950, Point 6), item 2 k outside the agenda.

After France's capitulation, Hartl, along with his family and his Jewish in-laws, fled to the tiny village of Fons in the Département of Lot, where he was officially employed as a "lumberjack" but actually collaborated with the Résistance and was an armorer in the 3rd Regiment of the *Franc-Tireurs et Partisans Français*.

In early 1945, he returned to Paris and was, by his own account, "unemployed" until January 1, 1946. He then served as Commissioner for Prisoners of War at the Austrian political mission in Paris, which was headed by Norbert Bischoff from February to December 1946. Bischoff was also the one who, in his capacity as head of the political department in the Foreign Ministry, had suggested Hartl for this post in October 1945. It was thanks to Hartl that the return of Austrian prisoners from France was completed earlier than from all other countries. The French prisoner of war command was filled with praise about the method of Hartl's management that was as tactful as it was energetic and effective, winning their respect and even their friendship to the highest degree. In December 1946, it was stated in the Foreign Ministry that in his activity as Commissioner for Prisoners of War, Hartl had "rendered extraordinary service to Austrian affairs."

In an official note of December 19, 1946, Norbert Bischoff, who was only briefly active in the Foreign Ministry before he left in 1947 to become ambassador to Moscow, once characterized Hartl as follows:

"In personal terms, although he is a man who does not deny his origins from the masses, he has acquired an education of extraordinary broadness in the areas of literature, history, and philosophy. He has written several books with a popular-scientific content which reveal a brilliant style and extremely alluring and personal wit. He is of the most winning nature in his dealings. His most prominent characteristics are a never-failing readiness for help and action and a burning Austrian patriotism of a specifically Viennese tone."

His acceptance into the diplomatic service was considered by Bischoff to be a "clear gain for it, even if Hartl certainly does not personify the conventional diplomatic type." On July 1, 1947, Hartl entered the Upper Level Foreign Service and was assigned to be the legation secretary for the political representation in Rome where, as he later complained, he "had to negotiate above all with the tiresome South Tyrolean's."²² He remained in Rome until the end of May 1949 and was then employed for six months in the central office in Vienna before, at the age of 41, being appointed as Consul First Class in January 1950 to be the head of the Austrian Consulate General in Tel Aviv with a monthly salary of 900 US dollars. On January 1, 1952, he was promoted to Consul General Second Class. He left Israel in March 1955.

²² August 14, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 48.

Bischoff was correct in all points with his characterization of Hartl, as the latter's reports and letters show again and again. Hartl wrote the reports with the aforementioned clear intent that in the year 2000, some doctoral student could use them to sufficiently describe the development of Israel and the Middle East. With a critical view that is practically surgical, Hartl describes and analyzes nearly all aspects of political, social, and economic life in Israel, and not just that which concerns relations with Austria. A view of the index of documents shows with what he occupied himself. His reports are critical, at times extremely so, witty in their formulation, filled with irony, and never boring – a great pleasure to read. The man could write! It must, however, be noted here that in so doing, he sometimes used the wrong tone or choice of words and made use of formulations that were indeed rather irritating. The most interesting, informative, and knowledgeable are Hartl's numerous private letters, on one hand to Israelis, on the other hand to the envoys Markus Leitmaier, Erich Bielka, Clemens Wildner, and Adolf Schärf ("Most Honorable Mr. Vice Chancellor, Dear comrade") in Vienna. He wrote these letters, as he once phrased it in May 1952, in "somewhat difficult situations," and the explanation is interesting:

"Perhaps it is to be ascribed to the circumstance that I have been an official for only a relatively short period of time and thus imponderables that weigh very heavily can be phrased more easily in private than in a report. But perhaps it is also the fear that I do not wish to mislead a doctoral student in the year 2000 who is assembling his sources about Israel in the middle of the twentieth century from the State Archives."²³

But in actuality, he did not do that!

For the first two months of his stay in Israel, Hartl lived provisionally in the Park Hotel on Hayarkon Street. The hotel lobby was used as a reception room for visitors who came to call, and a bathroom served as the file storage area. After that, he moved into a house on the same street. In a letter from the Foreign Ministry to the Ministry of Finance on January 13, 1950, reference was made to the serious housing shortage in Tel Aviv: 280 US dollars rent for a three room apartment, 350 US dollars for a four room apartment. "Living conditions," it went on to state, "are very poor and correspondingly expensive." The international salary of 900 US dollars per month that had been earmarked was authorized. Hartl's workload amounted to an average of ten to twelve hours per day. By April 1950, he had already processed 1,938 files. In the autumn of 1950, he once complained that the Foreign Office apparently was geared "toward putting [him] in the ground as soon as possible." He had the "turnover" of a "medium-sized legation but with only one employee, no automobile in a land that did not know any other means of transportation, no reasonable prospects for a vacation, a difficult climate. But somehow,

²³ May 26, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 27.

with all the trouble, knocking around with the Jews is fun for me, and in the end, I am in fact getting them to respect both Austria and me.”²⁴

Hartl went on to say that in the meantime, he was “the most popular foreign representative, only sometimes feared because of my ‘loud trap.’”²⁵ At the end of 1950, he identified his “most preferred tasks” to be the enlightenment of the, as he called them, “*Israelen*” [equivalent to “Israelis” in English] in matters of restitution for political-propagandistic reasons. Hartl spoke excellent French and English and some Italian, three languages which at that time in Israel were actually not at all necessary to be understood – German was spoken.

Hartl kept a low profile with the economic negotiations that were going on in Vienna between Austria and Israel and limited himself to “possible interventions with government offices” in Jerusalem. Because of the given circumstances, he “like it or not played the role of a political representative, and his intervening in purely economic negotiations” would happen because the confidentiality of negotiations in Israel “has an uncommon porosity, if the situation arises, a possibly undesirable political publicity.”²⁶

In April 1951, an edict from the Foreign Office reached Hartl according to which every employee of the Upper Level Foreign Service would have to undergo a professional examination if he had not already passed it and had not expressly been exempted from doing so. The examination consisted of one essay in each of the French and English languages in the area of diplomatic world history, international law, or economic policy and four oral examinations in world history after 1815, international law and international civil law, economic policy, and the structure and leadership of the Foreign Service. The oral examinations were given by a commission that was headed by either the foreign minister or the secretary general of the Foreign Office.

It was not the first time that Hartl had received this edict but, as he wrote to Socialist Vice-chancellor Adolf Schärff in Vienna [“Dear comrade Schärff”], his constant service had prevented an examination of that sort up to that point in time. “I also did not know how, with the constant, really one hundred percent demands upon my time, I could achieve any additional studying.” At any rate, it was to be deduced from the edict that there also had to be people who had been excused from this procedure: “I do not know what criteria are required for it, but I have to view it as somewhat grotesque that I am not among that circle of people. I may surely assume that in practical terms, I have produced my certificate of qualifications.” He then referred to his work with the prisoners of war which “not only earned 70,000 Austrians their freedom, but also earned me letters of commendation from Figl and Gruber, both of whom referred to my

²⁴ September 18, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 50.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ November 23, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 59.

particular diplomatic skill.” He did not want to mention this, since it dated from his “pre-diplomatic” time. “But it does appear strange, if this examination is demanded of a man who has already been working for fourteen months as the head of an office in a country with which Austria is not exactly friendly and whose running of the office has up until now not been the subject of one single complaint.” He did not request immediate intervention from Schärf, but merely that “you take note of this curiosity.” He did not demand an exception for himself, but “if there are exceptions, then I must be among them.” Hartl did not have to take any examination for the time being (he did so in May 1955 after his return from Israel [grade: “very good,” equivalent to an A]).

As Hartl once expressed to Schärf, Tel Aviv was the only Austrian diplomatic mission that was “without exception ‘red’”: clerk, chauffeur, secretary, and he himself. In fine self-irony, he described the office and its employees in this way: “We are without a doubt the ‘proles’ among the foreign missions. We have little time and we have not turned into fine people – but perhaps we thus match the country that we are in.” A little later on, he once complained that the detail work was suffocating him, “Legalizations, interventions, and consultations.” He hardly had any time for serious political analysis. “It is no wonder that close contact with Vienna is lost through dealing with daily odds and ends, because whom does Israel really interest when it is not just screaming that the Austrians are Nazis?”²⁷ That certainly also had something to do with the fact that he was often informed too late about decisions in Vienna to be able to provide clear answers to questions in Tel Aviv. For him, the “idiocy of the courier department” in Vienna was responsible for this; the most important matters were assigned to the slowest couriers. For Hartl it was clear: “There must be one person in the place who is a teetotaler and only drinks iodine-free water.” Through “horrific tortuous maneuvers he attempted to conceal his lack of knowledge from his colleagues and the Israeli authorities, as he confided to Vice Chancellor Schärf, but

“In the long run, it is rather unpleasant to play the fool here – even though I am sufficiently used to it – and to constantly be declaring that I do not know anything.”²⁸

In the summer of 1952, he applied for a vacation for the first time in two and a half years. He received from Vienna what he described as a “very puritanical response.” It was agreed that he could begin his vacation, but it was restricted by his being required to be reachable every day, that is, there would be no European vacation in 1952. Hartl did not consider that to be hard, since, as he expressed to the envoy Clemens Wildner on August 14, 1952, “My rather solid farmer physique makes this circumstance bearable. But if my

²⁷ January 31, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 6.

²⁸ April 7, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 101.

service in the Near East is to last much longer, then I am not completely sure about my 'genetics.'²⁹

A little while later, he requested an urgent vacation in Europe for his "most loyal soul" in the office: his secretary, Hedwig Blankenberg who, like his wife, was Jewish. For himself, he could "consume the hereditary stockpiling of an entire generation of farmers. But you may not demand of normal humans that they spend their vacation here, if this vacation is really supposed to provide the energy for renewed work." In Vienna, Cairo was regarded as overseas; Tel Aviv, on the other hand, was regarded as Europe. For Hartl, that was a "truly screaming injustice." For him, the only difference, aside from the "180 kilometer distance between Tel Aviv and Cairo" – with which he really meant 180 miles – was "that the freight rates from Israel are approximately one third higher than from Egypt." But there was something else, too: those who were assigned to the office were paid in Israeli local currency. According to Hartl, "There is nothing left for the poor dogs to do except to accept the local currency." But since the "Israelis" did not accept the local currency for a vacation outside of Israel, such a trip was not possible. "And a vacation taken within the narrow borders of this country is no vacation for Europeans."³⁰

Hartl was no "normal" official. He sometimes flirted with this attitude, but was then reminded by Vienna that he was indeed an official. Such as in April 1953, when he pronounced an Easter greeting to the Austrian listeners of the Israeli radio broadcaster "Kol Israel." In so doing, it meant that he had the uncertain feeling of perhaps nevertheless violating some official regulation, since his profession ought to be one of silence or, better yet, of speaking only when ordered to do so. But there was in fact not to be any prohibition against the Easter wishes. It was an independent act, so to speak. He notified the office in Vienna, but he could not obtain any approval because of the shortness of the time. He received a reply from the secretary general posthaste: Hartl's remarks would not be overly beneficial to the appearance of the Austrian civil service in general and that of the Foreign Office in particular. Without certain bureaucratic rules, a well-ordered operation of the office would not be possible, "and specifically not only with us, but in every country in the world."³¹

Even though there was a UN resolution that provided for the internationalization of Jerusalem, the Knesset declared Jerusalem to be the capital of Israel on January 23, 1950. In dealings with the Israeli Foreign Office, this at first did not cause any problems for the diplomatic representatives, since the Israeli Foreign Ministry continued to remain in Tel

²⁹ August 14, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 47.

³⁰ August 20, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 49.

³¹ April 25, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 113.

Aviv. There were only difficulties with the presentation of credentials. This was sometimes carried out in Tiberias when the Israeli president was staying there.

Things changed in 1953. On July 14, it was announced that the Foreign Office would move within forty-eight hours. Barracks were provided for this in Jerusalem, but they had not yet been totally completed. For those diplomatic representatives whose countries abided by the UN resolutions, Jerusalem was the “forbidden city” from then on.³² The Foreign Office in Jerusalem was boycotted. If the Israelis made an invitation to Jerusalem, it was replied to with an excuse; if diplomatic representatives made an invitation to Tel Aviv, an excuse immediately arrived from Jerusalem. In order to carry on a serious discussion at all, diplomatic “flophouses” had to be created, as Hartl phrased it. For him, the Austrian trade delegate Heinrich C. Katz sometimes took on the role of “providential house father.” His apartment in Tel Aviv was recognized by the “Israelis” as “neutral ground.”³³ In any case, during his period in office, Hartl did not once cross the threshold of the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem.³⁴ Conversely, the Israelis carried out “deliberate tactics of attrition” against him. His meetings in Jerusalem with officials of the Foreign Ministry always took place around midday, and so Hartl had the repeated honor of inviting them to lunch. Since he almost always had to speak with four or five officials and these discussions almost always took place in the King David Hotel, “every visit to Jerusalem meant an outlay for me of fifty to sixty Israeli pounds.”³⁵

Hartl was appealed to numerous times by the highest officials of the Austrian Foreign Office to not call upon the Israeli Foreign Office in Jerusalem. One of these unexpected visits took place in early July 1954, a few days after the Jordanians had fired shots at buildings in the western part of the city that were situated not far from the buildings of the Foreign Office. Hartl’s contact, in this case the deputy director of the Western European Department, Yehiel Iksar, had been speaking completely “privately,” and this circumstance of the shooting incident also then made it possible for Hartl to likewise respond “privately” and to deflect with a joke that perhaps would have been somewhat embarrassing for his contact. It was not just that he would put Hartl in conflict with the United Nations. He was also requiring an act of heroism from him “which, out of consideration for my age, I must decline.”³⁶ Not entering the Foreign Office in Jerusalem was more than just a symbolic gesture. It had to do with the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. And Vienna was not prepared to give in to that as long as the “Israelis on their part do not appear inclined to promise a concession – even only in

³² July 23, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 39.

³³ December 23, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 191.

³⁴ April 26, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 51.

³⁵ July 7, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 90.

³⁶ July 7, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 90.

passing for the case of the accommodation that is striven for – such as a better handling of Austrian assets in Israel.”³⁷

On numerous occasions, Hartl also wrote letters to the editor to those newspapers that reported especially critically on Austrian. And wonderful plays on words are to be found in them, such as in the letter to the editor of *Haboker* on April 18, 1954: “The popular saying goes, ‘It’s hard to be a Jew.’ As a sensible extension of this sensible observation, I would add, ‘It’s hard to be an Austrian among Jews.’”³⁸ Five years in Israel were also not easy for Hartl. In a letter to Vienna in August 1954, he said with resignation, “I hope that you bring me home by the end of the year.”³⁹ And in October 1954, he wrote, “It would be high time that they took me away from here.”⁴⁰ That was to occur a few months later.

Israel and “the Israelis”

The longer that Hartl was in Israel, the sharper was his criticism of the young state and its inhabitants, those 1.5 million Jews who, as Hartl stated in October 1954, “as the result of an historic accident and indisputable personal courage, are today called Israelis.”⁴¹ Above all else, though, his criticism was directed at the “official” Israel and its leading politicians. In the beginning, the State of Israel was for him “a state of unilateral confidence, and somehow the Israeli air lightly carries the refrain that was once sung in other parts, ‘What is right is that which is of use to the people.’”⁴² He believed that he already recognized signs early on “that the Jew who turns into an Israeli deintellectualizes himself.” People like himself – with his irreproachable biography, being married to a Jewish women – were “actually very disturbing figures” in Israel. “A blatant antisemite fits much better into the calculation and is somehow a positive for the Israeli balance sheet.” His description of the Israeli official returns to oft-cited prejudices and could not have been sarcastic: he distinguishes himself through “Jewish modesty, Prussian charm, and Polish order.”⁴³ In 1952, Hartl considered the irregularity of the payment of state officials to be an important move in the direction of the “Levantization and corrupting of the bureaucracy.” At the assumption of his post in 1950, he had hardly

³⁷ July 19, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 101.

³⁸ April 18, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 49.

³⁹ April 28, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 120.

⁴⁰ October 11, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 129.

⁴¹ October 4, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 126.

⁴² April 25, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 23.

⁴³ June 27, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 31.

noticed any corruption. In June 1952, “circumstances had sunk to the level of the usual circumstances in the eastern Mediterranean.”⁴⁴

Then there is furthermore the discussion of the “ghetto nationalism of the State of Israel,”⁴⁵ that the country “lives off of the money of American Jews,”⁴⁶ and that the government is conducting a policy of “frenetic immigration and a utopian economic policy.”⁴⁷ It appeared “that the environment of the lasting Middle Ages with the Arabs and a ghetto of oversized proportions with the Israelis diminishes to a large degree the eye’s ability to see decisions affecting world politics.”⁴⁸ Hartl speaks of the “spectacular but pernicious immigration.”⁴⁹ It was the “observant Jews from Yemen, Morocco, and Iraq;” to these “primitives,” Ben Gurion appeared to be “a messiah who made the prophets a reality and who had brought the scattered ones back to the land of their fathers.”⁵⁰ Hartl’s opinion of Ben Gurion turned out to be rather negative. The Israeli prime minister was a “personality”⁵¹ but a “very emotive man”⁵² to whom “Mosaic wrath and the rage of the prophets and a thirst for blood are not foreign,”⁵³ one who conducted “risky politics;”⁵⁴ and, as he stated to Foreign Minister Karl Gruber on December 12, 1952, merely a man of the state – “I do not dare to say ‘statesman.’”⁵⁵ For Hartl, Menachem Begin was simply a “fascist,”⁵⁶ Finance Minister Levi Eschkol, later to be prime minister, was “the treasurer of the Jewish Agency,”⁵⁷ he considered Israel on the whole to be an “unimportant but also very unpleasant spot.”⁵⁸ In the country,

“anti-antisemitism completely takes the place that antisemitism functionally takes in non-Jewish countries, and Germany and Austria provide the way out for government

⁴⁴ June 19, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 31.

⁴⁵ December 12, 1952, Volume 2, Doc. 3.

⁴⁶ August 12, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 94.

⁴⁷ May 6, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 116.

⁴⁸ April 20, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 77.

⁴⁹ October 22, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 103.

⁵⁰ July 18, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 88.

⁵¹ December 12, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 69.

⁵² May 19, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 22.

⁵³ October 28, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 169.

⁵⁴ May 19, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 22.

⁵⁵ December 12, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 69.

⁵⁶ January 24, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 5.

⁵⁷ June 19, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 31.

⁵⁸ November 4, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 61.

propaganda and journalism that is to be chosen when there are internal difficulties. In cases of difficulties with domestic policy, aggression in foreign policy is prescribed to dictatorships by the sociological systematist. Israel reacts to domestic political pressure with complaints to and demands on other countries. It counts on the undeniable guilt of the world. Not only on that of Germany and that of the areas occupied by it, but on the guilt of everyone – the entire world and all countries in which the murder of fleeing Jews slipped through the cracks of the order of everyday life, with one solitary but, in practicality, not insignificant difference from the events of everyday life: those who stayed behind were murdered. Thus, in addition to its small but powerful army, Israel has available a larger one: that of the dead Jews.”

Israel’s strongest divisions were the “dead of the mass graves, of the concentration camps, and of the gas chambers.”⁵⁹ It was a land that “allowed blood to be compensated for with money.”⁶⁰ The “Israelis” were “a peculiar people”⁶¹ but, “with all their unpleasant characteristics, a very logical people.”⁶²

The criticism by the trained economist Hartl of the government’s economic policy turned out to be withering: “A megalomaniacal policy and idiotic miscalculations in available funds” led to such financial problems that “everything that somehow seems attainable has to be recklessly grasped at.”⁶³ As an old Austrian who was an expert on Karl Kraus, he said, “Damned if it doesn’t sometimes appear that a little branch of *The Last Days of Mankind* was opened here, where Privy Councilor Schwarzgelber [“Yellowandblack,” the colors of the Imperial Austrian flag] is satisfactorily replaced by Comrade Blueandwhite.”⁶⁴ As the “winner of the wartime boom,” Israel had lived beyond its means.⁶⁵

At the end of 1951, Israel’s financial situation had become so precarious that Heinrich C. Katz had also “never before experienced [it] in any other country.”⁶⁶ In Hartl’s opinion, the situation was catastrophic. “It can hardly be covered up that the country is threatened by hunger.” And furthermore, “Israel has been cleaned out of its own capital. It has seeped away into the storerooms of the new immigrants, into the cracks of the unproductivity of the local economy, and above all else into the hole of the economic

⁵⁹ November 25, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 65.

⁶⁰ October 4, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 126.

⁶¹ April 16, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 106.

⁶² August 2, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 108.

⁶³ November 4, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 61.

⁶⁴ November 16, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 62.

⁶⁵ January 2, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 78.

⁶⁶ October 21, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 102.

incompetence of the pseudo socialist monopoly companies.”⁶⁷ After the granting of a 65 US million dollar loan, what was faced at the time was the “receivership of an otherwise bankrupt state.” In the face of the “drought of the present,” the “spring-abundant past” was invoked. According to Hartl,

“The entire country seems to be built over Ali Baba’s cave. No sooner have our eyes that were blinded by the sparkle and shimmer gotten used to the normal blackness then we are most intensely reliving the deeds of Maccabee I... and Maccabee II; measured against these deeds, Xenophon and Beowulf, Jan Ziska and Zriny could only do one reasonable thing – fade away quickly and with as little sensation as possible!”⁶⁸

The new immigrants from the East came from countries “where living parliamentarianism is perhaps rarer than soap.”⁶⁹ In his opinion, the Levant had always had its

“solid guild of professional criminals. As far as Israel is concerned, the gangs from Jaffa, Haifa, Akko, and Jerusalem were driven across the border by the political and military events of 1948. But Israel imported its criminals, actually emeritus experts, from the slums of Casablanca, Algiers, Tunis, and Baghdad. The poor ‘refugees’ in Jordan and the poor ‘immigrants’ from North Africa and Iraq were standing on virgin territory without having a real field of work and without being organized horizontally or vertically. Both groups are at approximately the same stage of civilization, have the same interests, and speak a common language: Arabic.”⁷⁰

In the country itself, there were incidents of corruption and smuggling in which important figures were involved. In 1954, one thing was for certain for Hartl:

“Public morals, which were very high during the first years of the state, are in constant decline. The legacy of the ghetto and Levantism punch serious holes into a society that has been able to maintain a remarkable moral level by living off of idealistic reserves for a lengthy period of time.”⁷¹

The longer Hartl was in the country, the more critical his judgment turned out to be. During a trip to Eilat – incidentally, a wonderful travelogue – the people in the Negev made a deep impression upon Hartl. “What we have here is the genuine pioneer type

⁶⁷ October 22, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 103.

⁶⁸ October 4, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 126.

⁶⁹ January 6, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 4.

⁷⁰ January 28, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 83.

⁷¹ May 26, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 69.

that has created something great in the most varied places on earth.” But he immediately expressed his doubts. The only question, which he could barely answer, was “whether the ‘morals of the hinterlands’ would correspond to the impetus of this advanced group.”⁷²

Again and again, he referred to the consequences of the Arab-Israeli war of 1948-49 “which led to the premature birth and perhaps miscarriage of the thing that had been given the name ‘Israel.’”⁷³ Israel was, “whether it wanted to be or not, nevertheless a splash of the Europe that had been smashed up by Hitler and which remained stuck to the coast of Asia Minor.” In his opinion, in April 1954 it had to be “considered as proven that the grafting of Europe onto the ancient Near Eastern branch was unsuccessful – this scion never got the sap from the roots and, without outside aid, will wither.”⁷⁴

The “calling into question of Israel” would “no doubt cause severe disturbances, but would probably not bring about any world conflict.”⁷⁵ Hartl was convinced that Israel had to be content with “what it really is – a small, very poor country. And only peace with the Arabs will lead to this meager but halfway-secure existence.”⁷⁶ However, it had an army which, even if it were small when measured against world armament, “was more than sufficient in local deployment for a ‘bouleversement’ of the territorial balance of power as well as the balance of power in the Middle East.” This weapon with regional weight made it possible for Israel to play “the role of the violent beggar.”

In Israel, it was not easy to bring a policy of the subdued word “compromise” to a people which, for understandable reasons, did not love “the nations” very much and which had climbed “out of the miraculously won war” with very weighty nationalism that “lacked any refinement of civilization and any charm.”⁷⁷ And then came a harsh judgment: “Israeli nationalism differed little from German nationalism.” In Israel, there was “the ugliest and most primitive limitation of believing one’s own nation to be better, and heavens above – first and foremost, toward the Arabs – that instead of one and a half million Israelis, there were 80 or 200 million. The Jews are also really not so kosher if they believe that they have the possibility to do so.”⁷⁸

⁷² March 20, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 12.

⁷³ August 4, 1954; Volume 4, Doc. 110.

⁷⁴ April 28, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 53.

⁷⁵ December 7, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 182.

⁷⁶ April 12, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 105.

⁷⁷ May 26, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 69.

⁷⁸ August 7, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 111.

And with respect to the Arabs, they have by their own statement reformulated the old “law of the desert,” so to speak, “No longer a tooth for a tooth, but a whole set of teeth for a tooth,” as Hartl interpreted without contradiction the reflections of a high-ranking official of the Israeli Foreign Ministry after a border clash.⁷⁹ And after the attack on the Arab village of Kibye in Jordan, in which sixty-nine people were killed, half of whom were women and children, he noted, filled with disappointment:

“At the time, Israel’s power seemed to me to be moral, a credit for the guilty conscience of the world, of the whole world that more or less shared the blame for the murder of millions. With Kibye, the whole world will be freed of a good part of its guilty conscience, since the example shows that the victim murders just as well and just as gladly as the former murderer. This moral leveling off – a downward leveling – has excused the rest of the world; and thus hereafter, Israel will be weighed at its unladen weight and has become much lighter.”⁸⁰

In Hartl’s opinion, the attitude of the Israelis toward the Arabs corresponded to that of the American settlers at the beginning of the nineteenth century toward the Indians or the Australian farmers at the same time toward the “Australoids.”⁸¹ Hartl speaks of the “undeniable chauvinism of the people who view the Arabs as people of a second and third grade.”⁸² The Israeli policy basically tended

“to make life unpleasant for the Arabs in their land, and experience has shown that there is no better regime to achieve this unpleasantness than that of the military.”⁸³

As a conqueror, Israel occupied a purely Arab area, had seized Arab property, and had a minority – specifically, a minority of 175,000 Arabs that was physically nearly enclosed – and any concession that Israel could offer had to appear insufficient to the Arabs.⁸⁴ And with regard to the future of the Palestinian refugees, Hartl also did not see any simple solution, since “the Palestinian refugee is not the historically honored exile for whom the homeland is convertible into banknotes.”⁸⁵ And with regard to the protection of minorities and their rights, in Israel these were “empty words.”⁸⁶ Israel’s religious policy

⁷⁹ August 16, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 112.

⁸⁰ October 21, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 165.

⁸¹ June 5, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 78.

⁸² August 12, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 94.

⁸³ May 1, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 16.

⁸⁴ November 25, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 174.

⁸⁵ October 4 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 126.

⁸⁶ May 31, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 27.

was “trickish and, above all else, disapproving and sly to the Christian denominations.”⁸⁷ In his estimation, there would be no conference and no peace: “... and the ceasefire will thus continue to rot in its own muck – and sometimes send up bloody bubbles.” In 1952, it was clear to him that Israel “undoubtedly [has] expansionist designs,” but “not the material possibilities to give in to these desires for expansion.”⁸⁸ Two years later, he at least saw no danger for the coming days, but the possibility of it and the worry for the future remained. Or else Israel would carry out a brutal strike, a preventative strike, in order to achieve gains and a new basis for negotiations: “In short – today, Israel belongs to us; tomorrow.”⁸⁹ In his opinion, Israel was an “artificial state” which had a border “that sweats blood;” and in March 1954, he added – almost prophetically – that atrocity would be answered with atrocity, “senseless murder on both sides, bestiality as a means to a political solution in a hopeless situation”⁹⁰ in a “sphere of political disorganization.”⁹¹

The Austrian envoy in Cairo, Robert Friedinger-Pranter, had described the situation in May 1951 correctly, even if it was in his own particular way, namely, “The latent state of war between Israel and the Arab states [is] one of the most dangerous portals of entry for the bacillus of a global conflagration to the body of human civilization.”⁹² His successor in Cairo, Clemens Wildner, added in November 1954, after a conversation with the Egyptian foreign minister and Arab colleagues, that nothing had changed in the attitude of the Arab states with regard to this matter. Israel’s Arab neighbors believed “that in the view of the Arab world, the existence of the Israeli state would always be a festering wound. As long as the injustice inflicted upon the Arabs (expulsion from Israel, confiscation of their property, etc.) was not compensated down to the last dollar and cent, the current state of affairs would continue and would signify a perpetual threat of war. Time was on the side of the Arab states, which were becoming stronger and stronger militarily.”

In a friendly discussion, it had been made clear to him that in such a case, if the Arab states had really armed and a combination would result that was favorable to world politics, then “the chances for the continued existence of the Jewish state cannot be the best.”⁹³

⁸⁷ February 16, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 22.

⁸⁸ June 19, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 31.

⁸⁹ August 4, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 110.

⁹⁰ March 22, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 38.

⁹¹ November 25, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 64.

⁹² May 28, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 83.

⁹³ November 24, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 148.

That matched the estimation of the Arab states that Karl Hartl had already provided in November 1951, namely, “In the Middle East... the word remains trump; the intoxication of the phrase is suffered by the lands of the lowest alcohol consumption.”⁹⁴ But in 1954, it was also clear to him that “in no way [does there exist] an Arab need for genuine peace.”⁹⁵

Relations between Austria and Israel

On February 2, 1950, Karl Hartl presented his credentials to the director of the consular department of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Zwi Avnon, a former Dutch career diplomat. Contrary to expectations, the presentation occurred in conjunction with a lengthy conversation in which the problems were discussed that resulted from the fact that Israel did not have codified body of law whatsoever, which above all else made difficult the recognition of Israeli or Austrian citizenship. “Obviously with the intention of emphasizing the desire for friendly relations,” Avnon explained that his government wanted to treat Hartl as a consul general according to the *Présence*, even though Hartl had been designated in a diplomatic note only as a consul first class. In the end, Avnon expressed the hope that the presence of an Austrian consul in Israel could be useful in reducing the opposition against Austria that was present in the country and to finally make it disappear.

It was clear to Hartl, as he reported to Vienna, that Israel’s government undoubtedly intended to bring an end to the isolation of the country that it perceived, but the emotional stance of significant segments of the population stood in the way of this. The difficulties that posed opposition to the path to a rational friendship would, however, be valid not just for Austria, but to much greater degree also for England and, recently, for the Soviet Union, as well, since it had spoken out for the internationalization of Jerusalem. In any case, Hartl concluded, “even with the most cautious evaluation, there can be no doubt that the Israeli government has the intention of reducing the hatred against Austria that exists in the population, a hatred which is so often rooted in a very schematic identification of Austria with Germany.”

However, he still momentarily awaited attacks by the press against which to protest but which, with the reigning press freedom, would hardly make sense and the answer to which would only be found in a “clarifying action” to be issued from the consulate general.⁹⁶ And just a little later, he was visited by a go-getting journalist, Imanuel Unger,

⁹⁴ November 21, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 110.

⁹⁵ September 23, 1954; Volume 4, Doc. 125.

⁹⁶ February 12, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 3.

who subsequently published an article that was filled with praise for Hartl,⁹⁷ which for him was almost somewhat embarrassing.⁹⁸

The longer Hartl was in the country, the more critical he became. In April 1953, he once wrote to one of his Israeli colleagues in Vienna, Eshel,
 “I am modest and tired. I went to your land in search of friendship for my people. I had set my sights too high – well beyond my life. I soon recognized that and confined myself. What matters to me now is to reduce the friction so much that it disappears without any bang or sensation.”

But even that would “probably [be] a goal that was set too high.”⁹⁹ Hartl and Eshel corresponded with each other further. On August 4, 1954, Hartl privately called him his “active opponent in Vienna.” “He is almost like an Israeli-made watch: sometimes he runs ahead, sometimes he runs behind. Which distinguishes him from Israeli timepieces: as a result of his restlessness, he always runs.” And Unger, who in the meantime had been employed by Eshel in Vienna, had completely fallen out of favor with him. He would speak of Austria only in his “weekly unpleasant remarks” whereby he first and foremost would press the Jewish demands against Austria. In March 1954, Hartl wrote to Foreign minister Leopold Figl, “It is indeed somewhat aggravating when a journalist who has now been sitting in Vienna for a year and a day, who is not lacking in a certain primary intelligence, who has sufficient time and opportunity to inform himself correctly, lies with stubborn hatred and narrow animosity.”¹⁰⁰ Unger, “that poor hack of a writer,” actually feared only one thing, “but he fears it like the devil fears holy water: to have to go back to Israel. If we were to give him the few “Groschen” that he needs in order to stay in Austria, he would even write for us.”¹⁰¹ And another journalist, the owner and publisher of the tabloid *Maariv* – who, in connection with the problems involved with compensation, wrote commentaries that were extremely critical of Austria – was for him a “revolver journalist.”¹⁰²

First and foremost in his private letters, Hartl made no secret of his disappointment about official Israel. Thus, to him, the establishment of relations between the two states was “exclusively a calculation by the Israeli side which was simply collecting the greatest possible number of states that would recognize the status that emerged through the outcome of the Jewish-Arab war.” Thus, relations had “been unconditionally accepted

⁹⁷ August 25, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 43.

⁹⁸ August 26, 1950, Volume 2, Doc. 44.

⁹⁹ April 22, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. III.

¹⁰⁰ March 22, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 37.

¹⁰¹ January 6, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 4.

¹⁰² December 12, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 69.

on the part of Israel while, viewed purely in terms of national law, Austria [was] the half to give.” He would be the last to deny that in late 1949-early 1950, the establishment of relations with Israel had been without advantages for Austria:

“I myself have endeavored within the framework of my office and to the extent of my energies to build and maintain a good relationship with Israel that for us was above all else important in appearance. To the extent that I had them at all, I gave up my illusions about the possibility of an actual friendship between the two countries and only endeavored to prevent anything from ‘happening.’” And then came the admission in his letter to Adolf Schärf on December 7, 1953, “As to the reason why I could not do anything at all – the official Israel hated Austria and basically will hate it for the foreseeable future.”¹⁰³

What led Hartl to this assessment? At first, Hartl looked upon the policy of the Israeli government primarily from the point of view of an economist. And thus he viewed it as his duty to give early warning against possible agreements with this government. On May 14, 1951, when the topic was an initial loan from the Austrian Länderbank to the Jewish Agency, he made it clear that the sole guarantee from the former Anglo-Palestine Bank was “thoroughly insufficient.”¹⁰⁴ He was only informed right at the end about the negotiations that were going on in Vienna on the 100 million schilling credit. However, he then expressed his most severe misgivings. In view of its difficult financial situation, Israel would be able to sell the Austrian goods to third countries, even if it were at a loss.

“I have to fear that quality goods imported from Austria... will suddenly appear on American and South American markets 20% cheaper than the Austrian export price and will shatter our market. For Israel, that is acceptable business because Israel has the necessary breathing room and the price reduction still brings a profit in terms of interest.” He went on to write on October 10, 1952 that he was endeavoring “to see things as black like a pessimist, and you will all be satisfied if in the end, a gray remains to be seen for persons with normal vision. If I may express any wish and a hope, then it is that we somehow emerge unhurt from this damn credit agreement.”¹⁰⁵

It became clear as early as late 1951 that the Israeli Foreign Office was very interested in the establishment of diplomatic relations with Austria. The first Israeli initiative came in November 1951. According to Gershon Avner, head of the Western Europe Department in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, it was high time to normalize Austrian-Israeli relations and to transform them into diplomatic relations.¹⁰⁶ But it soon became clear that this

¹⁰³ December 7, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 182.

¹⁰⁴ May 14, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 79.

¹⁰⁵ October 10, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 57.

¹⁰⁶ November 3, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 106.

was not so simple. In February 1952, Avner told Hartl that with the establishment of diplomatic relations, it would be “desirable” that “at the beginning of the establishment” of these relations, there would be “the granting of the credit and an exchange of addresses of friendship associated with it”. This was “not a condition,” it would merely “make infinitely easier” the psychological preparation of the Israeli public.¹⁰⁷ Consul Eshel phrased it differently in April: it just had to do with a “*representation*.” This was only to represent a temporary stage in the transformation of consular relations. Foreign Minister Gruber made it clear that the “suggestion by Tel Aviv that was made in unworldly doctrinarism to allow the consulate generals to exist and to only grant the heads of the offices diplomatic immunity was out of the question. If necessary, then things would have to remain at their current state of affairs.”¹⁰⁸ “Any hybrid [would be] rejected.”

Ears sharpened in Vienna when Eshel made it clear that Israel desired a declaration of friendship on the part of Austria, more or less to the effect that

“the Federal Republic of Austria was to be viewed as the successor to the earlier Democratic Austria, that it had nothing to do with Hitler Germany and the Austrian Jews, and that it unconditionally condemned the atrocities and acts of inhumanity carried out against the Austrian Jews by the Austrian Nazis.”

With the envoy Wildner, Eshel was even more clear. Wildner must not forget “that a portion of the Austrian population that was not inconsequential had sinned against the Jews.”¹⁰⁹ Wildner informed Hartl and indignantly stressed, “Austria has nothing to do with these things, and it is not the occasion for us to especially emphasize this in a declaration of friendship.”¹¹⁰

Hartl viewed this exactly the same way without any qualification. The objection by the Israeli Foreign Office that in its relations with Austria, Israel had to “control” public opinion was, in his view, “only correct to a limited degree,” as he gave Wildner to understand in a private letter:

“When viewed with precision, the Israeli public today has worries that are very different than that of a greater or lesser friendship with Austria. It may well be that the spectacular treatment of the Austrian issue at the moment in which Israeli-German negotiations are more and more in the forefront can be not necessarily desirable. In this

¹⁰⁷ February 2, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 8.

¹⁰⁸ April 21, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 14.

¹⁰⁹ May 24, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 24.

¹¹⁰ June 17, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 30.

case, however, it is practically immaterial whether Austria has half or full diplomatic representation in Israel.”

The possibility to differentiate between a political representative ad persona and an envoy would no doubt be over the head of “the Israeli in the street.” If Israel suggested the hybrid solution, that occurred with the intention “to impose upon us a ‘time-related’ punishment of sins, and to do so while fully factoring in the fact that on several occasions, the Israeli press could also criticize the establishment of these relations.”

Hartl then suggested, though, to moderate the categorical form of the rejection and to resort to delay tactics:

“For the most varied of reasons that are certainly historically understandable, the Israeli state and its government by its very essence are the friend of no one. To a far greater extent than is typical with other states, in the Jewish state the degree of friendship is assessed according to the opportunity. The physical and spiritual traumas of the Jewish people as a whole must not cause every non-Jew and every non-Jewish community to be considered in the old, Biblical sense as strangers in the essentially inimical sense.”

It would be futile – and not just for Austria, which was starting from a particularly unfavorable point of departure – to court the friendship of Israel and the “Israelis.” “Genuine friendship with this people is only to be expected in the second or third generation of future Israelis.” And he even provided a foundation for this attitude: “The dead of this people live on, and there is no argument against the dead, especially when they were murdered.” The shadow of these dead lay over not only Austria and Germany, but over all nations, “nations” understood in the biblical sense. Hartl therefore believed that in the relations with Israel – and in this case, it was of no importance that he spoke as an Austrian – this exceptional situation was to be taken into consideration: “Nothing is more legitimate than that the antisemitism that historically has been so effective has begotten a Jewish chauvinism, an active anti-antisemitism which in its practical form is very similar to antisemitism.” And there were no rational arguments against “isms.” For that reason, Hartl went on to say, “I believe it must be underscored that even though in the future, we will hopefully have to use the word ‘friendship’ on several occasions, in our lifetime a friendship of Israel either with Austria or with any other non-Jewish state is not to be counted upon.”¹¹¹

All the same, Austria went on to guarantee the 100 million schilling credit – and Israel in turn officially renounced demands for reparations from Austria. At the same time, negotiations were going on with the Federal Republic of Germany and resulted in the Luxembourg Agreement under which Germany was obligated to pay a total of 3.45 billion deutschmarks. In Hartl’s view, this was “blood money.” In his opinion, the

¹¹¹ May 26, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 27.

Germans had to “be made socially acceptable for five million American Jews.”¹¹² The fact that within this context, it was also thought to include Austrian shipments in the West German reparations payments to Israel – as “a costly new impetus for additional export shipments to Israel”¹¹³ – was only one consideration, although rather a noteworthy one. When a bomb attack was then carried out on the office of the Israeli foreign minister as a protest against the agreement with Germany, it was also clear to Hartl that for a Jew whose mother and father had been killed in an extermination camp, it indeed had to appear difficult and degrading to receive the compensation for his murdered parents “in the form of a toilet from Düsseldorf.” Hartl doubted that the Germans would keep the agreement. There would then basically not be very much left of this treaty in view of the fact “that the Jews who were murdered by the Nazis are rotting at a faster and faster pace and will disappear as admonishing ghosts. Wine gets better with age; corpses get worse.”¹¹⁴

After the allocation of the credit, Hartl definitely believed that with skillful action and attentive exploitation of the opportunities that were being offered, relations with Israel could be definitively normalized. “Not because the Israelis will be so fond of us as a result of my winning nature, but rather because objective circumstances will compel them to do so.” And if so, then he would gladly see its completion through, because... “For three years, I have been slaving away like someone pushing a brick around, and it would be very unpleasant for me if someone else were to bring things to a close.” And then, somewhat resignedly, “But I do believe that no one else wants to come here!” although he went on to consider:

“However, it must in any case be avoided that some fool from Vorarlberg takes the job and they really end up doing all the things they want: sending a banished Catholic who is necessarily from the Franciscans – with whom I incidentally get along most excellently – and who could know more Vatican policy than would be beneficial to Austria; appointing a Jew as an Austrian representative who would be regarded by the Zionists of the most varied varieties as a traitor to his people – and finally and understandably no one who had anything to do with the Nazis. He should never have been an officer in the Wehrmacht, in order to not give the particularly unpleasant ‘press hacks’ in this country a genuine target.”

And then there was the piece of advice to Adolf Schärf: “It would be best if you were to find a younger comrade to whom I could pass on my legacy” who should be “as little of an antisemite as possible” since “he will become one here anyway.”¹¹⁵

¹¹² January 24, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 5.

¹¹³ September 16, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 52.

¹¹⁴ October 10, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 57.

¹¹⁵ January 13, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 80.

“The Victim Thesis” and Reparations

The 100 million schilling credit had a price for Israel: it officially accepted the Austrian “victim thesis” and renounced Austrian “reparation payments”. Foreign Minister Sharett made the following declaration in Paris in 1952:

“Israel will not demand reparations from Austria... Israel accepts the supposition that Germany is responsible for acts committed against Austrian Jews since they took place only after the Anschluss.”¹¹⁶

Official Israel thus perforce and against its better judgment also accepted the official position of Austria in this matter. In the Israeli public, on the other hand, the Austrian victim thesis was not accepted. As Hartl reported in 1953, when in Vienna the reparation talks were beginning with representatives of world Jewry, the “Jewish press” reacted “aggressively almost without exception”¹¹⁷ – and that also remained the case in the subsequent period.

In Moscow in the autumn of 1943, the Allies had described Austria as the “first victim of Hitlerite aggression.” In April 1945, this “Moscow Declaration” had become something of a founding charter of the Second Republic; and that, in turn, was the moment of the birth of the myth of the Austria as a victim. The new Austria was a single land of victims; the Jews were consequently only victims among victims. The series of raids against them after the Anschluss in March 1938 was simply officially cut out, even if the political decision-makers were fully conscious of the moral doubtfulness of it. For miles around, there were no culprits – and therefore no reason for compensation. Only the legal successor to the German Reich was responsible for reparations, that is, the Federal Republic of Germany, “which [is regarded] as the originator of the injustices that were committed,” as was officially stated. When, however, representatives of World Jewish Congress announced claims in Vienna in the summer of 1953 and the government declared that it was prepared to hold talks, it at the same time – that is, on August 6, 1953 – once again made its own position clear. In a so-called “*Regelung der Sprache*” (“Language Regulation”) to the foreign representatives, it stated:

“In Austria, all measures of persecution [were] only perpetrated after the occupation by the German Reich. Under international law, Austria was incapable of acting at that time. It therefore cannot be held responsible for the actions and decrees of the National Socialist rulers which occurred against its will and which it was not in a position to prevent. Reparations from Austria are also not being demanded by any side. Israel has expressly endorsed this viewpoint. As already mentioned, the talks with the Committee

¹¹⁶ As quoted in the *Jerusalem Post* on August 18, 1952. See Volume 3, Doc. 88.

¹¹⁷ August 4, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 149.

for Jewish Claims on Austria therefore do not concern the provision of reparations to Israel or to World Jewish Congress, but rather are aimed at various measures for the improvement of the individual lot of the victims of National Socialism who are of the Jewish faith.”

Hartl was among the most vehement advocates of the Austrian victim thesis, and he thus lined up especially with the socialist politicians who supported this thesis particularly energetically – including Schärf, with whom Hartl expressly agreed. Thus, as he affirmed in December 1953, it was “a great relief” for him “that at the time, you did not follow the inflation of concessions and promises by others out of the undoubtedly correct assessment of the unladen weight.”¹¹⁸ If Hartl’s numerous statements on this topic are read, one has to wonder what brought him to this attitude. At a minimum, his position is astounding. Hartl was himself an immigrant. He had left the country after the Anschluss with his Jewish wife and Jewish in-laws and devoted himself to resistance against the Nazi regime.

In that context, Hartl was surely not aware of the following: that Austrians were disproportionately represented in the Nazi terror apparatus and had decisively contributed to the implementation of the mass murder of Jews; that 40% of the personnel and three quarters of the commandants of the extermination camps came from Austria, such as Irmfried Eberl, the first commandant of the Treblinka extermination camp, and his successor, Franz Stangl, who had previously already been the commandant of the Sobibor extermination camp; that all three commandants of the Theresienstadt ghetto came from Austria; that Austrians also organized the deportations from all over Europe; that 80% of the “Eichmann men” had been Austrians; that a conspicuously large number of Austrians had participated as members of the SS taskforces in mass shootings of Jews and non-Jewish civilians behind the front; that nearly 14% of all SS members had been Austrians, even though the Austrian portion of the Reich’s population amounted to only 8%; that according to the assessment by Simon Wiesenthal, Austrians had been directly responsible for the murder of at least three million Jews. But he would have had to have known that after 1938, Austrians had been the beneficiaries and perpetrators in the exclusion, robbing, and expulsion of Jews and that not a few of them had materially profited from this: that apart from “Aryanized” companies and shops, there were, for example, 60,000 apartments in Vienna alone that had been made available to be allocated to non-Jews and that after 1945, no one thought of returning them; and that a similar situation had occurred with entertainment concerns, media, pharmacies, etc. etc.

Now it is surely true that leading Austrian politicians after 1945 acted as “children of their times;” that is, on one hand they were steeped in the tradition of an ambivalence

¹¹⁸ December 7, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 182.

toward antisemitism that also continued to be in effect after 1945, and on the other hand, they were also the products of and participants in a political postwar climate that was specifically Austrian, one in which interests of realpolitik had the highest priority (and making antisemitism taboo did not yet function to the extent that would later be the case). First and foremost, however, they massively lent their support to the victim thesis, according to which Austria had been the first victim of Hitlerian aggression and was not responsible for that which occurred from 1938 on.

The republic did indeed adopt several so-called “*Rückstellungsgesetze*” (“restitution laws”), “compensation” had been made, but these measures had been taken hesitantly, scattered over a plethora of confusing measures that were often too late and continually characterized by the denial of Austrians having a share of the responsibility in Nazi crimes and therefore devoid of honest generosity. Every new measure first had to be squeezed out of Austria. And with the laws on restitution, welfare, and compensation, it was emphasized again and again that they applied to all of the victims of National Socialism and did not permit different treatment for reasons of faith, race, or nationality. In a so-called “Language Regulation” from the Austrian Foreign Ministry to the diplomatic representation authorities, it expressly stated that this would also remain so in the future. The preferred treatment of victims of persecution of the Jewish faith thus could never be taken into consideration. Therefore, every appropriate measure that was still to be taken up at the suggestion of Jewish organizations would encompass all categories of victims of persecution and would be applied equally. When Chancellor Julius Raab, Foreign Minister Karl Gruber, and Finance Minister Reinhard Kamitz expressed their willingness for talks with representatives of World Jewish Congress, Hartl was outraged:

“What made a Raab, a Gruber, a Kamitz take their stance? If we imitate the Germans – but good heavens! – we simply are not the Germans and do not have to imitate them. We are not obligated to this righting of wrongs the way the Germans are, since we do not have an ‘illegal successor.’”¹¹⁹ And he warned, “There could be people who could use prejudices against us.”¹²⁰

When in one of his letters, Hartl spoke of “reparations to be provided” to Israel, he was immediately corrected by Vienna. That was an unsuitable expression, “the proper expression is Jewish claims.” For Hartl, the representatives of the World Jewish Congress who were carrying on talks in Vienna were “agents of the Israeli Treasury... nothing more;”¹²¹ in any case, it was clear that Israel “urgently needs cash.” Hartl went on to add that the negotiators and collectors of the Jewish Agency were employed full-time with

¹¹⁹ June 14, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 130.

¹²⁰ November 29, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 175.

¹²¹ July 1, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 137.

raising money for Israel and were not so fussy in their methods;¹²² the negotiations that were beginning in Vienna had aroused considerable excitement among the circles of former Austrians in Israel. If Austria were to pay and money were to go to Israel, even if in a roundabout way, then in Hartl's opinion, attention should and must be paid that it would be to the benefit of the former Austrians.

With regard to the actual victims – “and I am saying this with hundreds” – not one single person would be interested that the State of Israel would be indirectly financed. Apart from that, in his opinion there was also another weighty reason why the benefits from Austria should not go toward the State of Israel, namely, the Arabs. It could indeed be made understandable to them that in Austria, restitution and perhaps even compensation would be made, it could also be made understandable to them that restitution and compensation were going to Israel if it could be proven that all of this would go not to the benefit of the enemy state, but rather to private persons or private organizations that could prove a claim with respect to Austria: “Never ever will anyone make the Arabs recognize why the State of Israel is the legal successor to the Jews who perished in Austria,” and on June 14, 1953, Hartl told Schärf:

“I frankly confess to you – the arguments here are lacking even to me. And so we are running the risk of getting the whole pot – which the Arabs wanted to set up for the Germans on the occasion of the reparations agreement and then did not dare – dumped on our heads as ones who are weaker and smaller.”¹²³

And a few weeks later, he made it clear to Schärf:

“Certainly, I am for justice, but charity should attend to the unemployed in Austria before it goes to the Israeli mortars that are pounding the Arab villages to pieces. And that is what the balance represents – at least 45% of the balance, because with the total outlays of the State of Israel, military spending in the most varied of forms takes up 45% – for these mortars or these airplanes, since all global compensation that we concede to the Jewish negotiators goes to Israel. And we owe Israel nothing – not one groschen!”¹²⁴

Hartl was really outraged at the end of 1953 when a regulation from the Israeli Ministry of Trade became known banning the sale of Austrian soap while, at the same time, German soap continued to be sold. For Hartl, as he clearly expressed in a letter to Foreign Minister Figl, this was “veiled, though still clear, reverse pogrom rabbleroising... the blood of Christians in the host has been replaced by the fat of Jews in the soap.”¹²⁵

¹²² December 16, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 187. Also see July 26, 1952, Volume 3, Doc. 41.

¹²³ June 14, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 130.

¹²⁴ November 25, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 175.

¹²⁵ December 8, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 183.

In a letter to Schärf, he turned away from the official Israel appalled. This official Israel hated Austria and would always hate it for the foreseeable future:

“There was and is the possibility of neutralizing this aggressive impulse. Because of its daily difficulties, Israel will always make one last claim, and after its fulfillment it will want to be considered as satisfied. But will the sick soul of Israel, which sees in the ‘nations’ the former or potential murder of the Jews, be at all able to find the peace that it should, indeed must give to others in the interest of its own continued existence?”

And he provided the answer rather resignedly, “Probably scarcely in this generation, because Israel is compelled to market its hatred in order to protect the poor country that, in economic terms, is badly run from financial and political collapse.” And he went on to explain that by using the example of Austria. In 1949-50, the hatred against Austria had been neutralized and set aside since the newborn state of Israel needed the broadest political recognition. Israel then provisionally became stable and more or less discreetly gave Austria to understand – “in the end, markedly less” – that relations were indeed maintained but that scores had not been settled. In the end, the granting of the 100 million schilling credit had stood. Israel had declared that it did not want to make any claims on Austria, a promise that had formally been kept until then, because after the granting of the credit, calm had reigned for the time being. Attention was then directed at Germany. Pressing economic woes had compelled Israel “to haggle with the Germany of the murderers, to ‘realize’ moral condemnation and bitter hatred. Everyone knows and feels that it is blood money from which Israel lives today.”¹²⁶ And from that results the paradox “that in their complete isolation, the Israelis actually see their best friend to be – the Germans.”¹²⁷ However, with a view toward Austria, Israel had given its word that the state would make no claims on Austria, “certainly not, but nothing is more legitimate than the fact that the representatives of international Jewry are presenting the bill to Austria against which the “mess of potage” accepted by Israel cannot suffice. But the fact that Israel is following these representatives’ negotiations with Austria with the greatest interest, that through its consul it is cautiously and in the most friendly manner informing the Austrian government how damaging it would be for Austria if it were to have a falling out with these powerful international Jews – nothing is more legitimate, since nothing can be foreign to the State of Israel anywhere, anytime, and for anything that Jews are concerned. But Israel has not broken its word and thus for a long period of time, the blackmail may wear the mantle of a good deed.”

Israel had still not gone back on its word, “that word that is to cost us 100 million schillings.” But the interruption of negotiations in Vienna had already once again “unleashed the murmurings of hatred in the press.” When Raab and Kamitz had

¹²⁶ December 7, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 182.

¹²⁷ October 21, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 165.

declared that it would not work with the payments in that way, “then reciprocal ritual murder was applied; in order to calm the seething populace, the sale of Austrian soap was banned.” In support of the arithmetic, Hartl called this the “reciprocal pogrom.”¹²⁸

At any rate, he had a reason for the worry on the Israeli side of not reaching a settlement with Austria in “questions of reparations.” It was not about not being able to collect five, twelve, fifty million dollars; it was the “fear that the successful resistance by Austria to pay ‘reparations’ to Jewish organizations or, in a roundabout way, to Israel could give Germany ‘bad ideas.’”¹²⁹ For that reason, the “Austrian reparations” had become a test case, a “reagent to the value of German obligations. Between the Oder-Neiße line and the German tractor that is supposed to plow in the Negev, there appear to be more intimate correlations than I may reasonably assume,” he said in January 1954.

Hartl was correct with his supposition that the World Jewish Congress and the State of Israel had a common cause with regard to Austria. That was also demonstrated by the meeting on January 1, 1954 in the Israeli Foreign Ministry in which the additional measures against Austria were decided upon. In the words of a participant from the Israeli Consulate General in Vienna, Arie Eshel, the meeting was concerned with “determining whether and how the organizations and the State of Israel would proceed in order to break the ice as well as to ensure the coordination of steps.” He suggested several actions at the same time, specifically:

- “a) concentrated efforts in the world press;
- b) the preparation of disruptive actions during Raab’s visit to London;
- c) the urgent organization of support from socialist parties in the form of pressure on the Social Democratic Party of Austria;
- d) the publication of a blacklist on the anniversary of the Anschluss;
- e) the preparation of a memorandum to the four Great Powers.”

The president of the World Jewish Congress, Nahum Goldmann, spoke of American pressure on Austria and the intention to prepare large-scale public actions at various locations, including in London where a “warm reception” was to be prepared for Chancellor Julius Raab. In the words of the general director in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Walter Eytan, it was agreed to leak a report to the press according to which the Jewish organizations intended to provide the Great Powers with a memorandum and that this memorandum was to be drafted immediately in the Israeli Foreign Ministry. The Israeli envoys abroad were to receive instructions to speak with their Austrian counterparts at every opportunity about the failed negotiations and to explain to them the Israeli attitude on that matter: “It goes without saying that directives on that are to

¹²⁸ December 7, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 182.

¹²⁹ January 10, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 6.

be drawn up.” Action centers were to be set up in London or New York or in both cities and, at the same time, a blacklist was to be prepared.¹³⁰

Conclusion

What are we left with when we look at Hartl’s more than five years of service? Hartl was correct:

1. In the assessment in 1954 that France had become “the new good, big friend of Israel.” He was also correct that France would “not follow the same path for long.”¹³¹ (At any rate, things went along until 1967).¹³²

2. A similar situation held true with the assessment of Israel’s highly ambivalent attitude toward the USA. At the end of 1954, Hartl got a fix on a “desperate isolation” of Israel that viewed “just at this point the Jews of the Diaspora as allies,” but they were “very insecure allies” as was shown by “the abstentionist attitude of the most powerful group, the American Jews, with the change in American foreign policy that was so unfavorable for Israel.” In Israel’s view, the US had “clearly opted for the Arabs.”¹³³ “Israel would now gladly become a satellite of America; it is just that the path to do so is arduous – so arduous that even an Egyptian detour would probably be accepted.”¹³⁴ It then happened without the Egyptian detour.

Previously, Israel had sought “shelter” with its old enemy, Great Britain. There were already jokes circulating in Israel about it, such as, “When the English come to Haifa to build a naval base there, why do their feet have to be cut off immediately? So that they can’t leave again!”¹³⁵

1. At one point, Hartl once wrote that Israel had a border “that sweats blood,” that atrocity would be answered with atrocity, “senseless murder on both sides, bestiality as a means to a political solution in a hopeless situation” in a “sphere of political disorganization.”¹³⁶ That was almost prophetic; he was more than correct with it: Israel’s border also “bled” for the next fifty years; almost nothing has changed. If the date of

¹³⁰ January 1, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 1.

¹³¹ August 25, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 119.

¹³² See Rolf Steininger, *Der Nahostkonflikt* (Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag: Frankfurt am Main, 2003), 92.

¹³³ August 4, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 110.

¹³⁴ September 8, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 123.

¹³⁵ August 4, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 110.

¹³⁶ See notes 90 and 91.

some of Hartl's documents were changed from 1953-54 to 2004, it would hardly be noticed. In many cases, the problems have remained the same, as if time had stood still. The Israelis had and have developed a attitude that is somehow typical for them: on the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the state, Israeli television produced a relevant documentary. The title: "Never A Dull Moment." It can also be viewed that way – or perhaps it can only be viewed that way.

In several points, however, Hartl was incorrect with his assessments, fears, hopes, and analyses.

1. The Israelis did not use the 100 million schilling credit in order to sell the Austrian goods acquired on credit on other markets below cost – in competition with Austrian exports – in order to receive hard currency. They did not even completely use up the credit.

2. Not only did the Federal Republic of Germany fulfill the financial obligations that it assumed in the "Luxembourg Agreement" (Hartl said that "basically, not very much [would] be left" of them),¹³⁷ it in addition paid even more to Israel (the weapon shipments were not even mentioned).

3. The young State of Israel proved itself to be more capable of surviving than so many had hoped or feared.

4. Hartl's conviction that "the Jews who were murdered by the Nazis are rotting at a faster and faster pace and will disappear as admonishing ghosts" turned out to be completely wrong.

5. Contrary to Hartl's conviction, relations between Austria and Israel in subsequent years became better and better, almost friendly, with the high point coming in 1972 when Rudolf Kirchschläger became the first Austrian foreign minister to visit the country. The fact that relations then once again became more difficult is another matter.

6. The question of the establishment of official relations between Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany which, in late 1954, seemed to Hartl "to be about to receive its positive answer rather soon"¹³⁸ was only answered eleven years later.

After five years, Hartl left Israel on March 1, 1955. His successor was Dr. Kurt Enderl, likewise a former emigrant. Hartl became office manager in the central office in Vienna for Under Secretary of State Bruno Kreisky. Hartl, the "consummate Viennese," plump,

¹³⁷ January 13, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. 80.

¹³⁸ November 9, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 140.

humorous, erudite, cosmopolitan, and able to hold his liquor,¹³⁹ had turned into a popular figure in Israel, both in Jewish circles and with the diplomatic corps, and an honest friend of the former Austrians in Israel. They had organized themselves into the *Hitachduth Olej Austria*, (the “Society of Austrian Immigrants in Israel”). Its chairperson, Anitta Müller-Cohen, one of the best-known Zionists from Austria who had emigrated to Palestine in 1936, wrote the following about Karl Hartl in late 1950 in the Viennese Zionist journal *Neue Welt und Judenstaat* under the headline “Unser Konsul” [“‘Our Consul’ ”]:

“‘Our’ consul (we did not yet call him that at the time, that only came later when we got to know him and came to love him) acted as cleverly as he could. A man of his stature of course has his own views, but he does not perceive his task to be the provocative pronouncement of his personal ideas; rather, he keeps his private opinion to himself. He listened calmly and kindly to our reports that were filled with boundless enthusiasm for the newly arisen state, he patiently heard the complaints of returned emigrants who, like sick birds fouling their own nest, make the land of Israel responsible for their failures or for the adversity of their personal destiny. Whoever spoke with the consul had the impression that he *wants* to understand us. And this will, combined with a very particular human charm, won our sympathy. The inner security of a person who was conscious of his skill protected Hartl from arrogance

In the Austrian Consulate General in Tel Aviv, customer service was reshaped into service for people... Karl Hartl and his wife won many friends for the Austrian state. The past lectures, promotional films, and propaganda brochures could not have achieved anywhere near the same effect. Everyone who, in spite of everything, still has a soft spot in the heart for the land of their birth – and who doesn’t? – is happy that the Second Austrian Republic sent a representative to the Jewish land of which it could certainly be said, ‘He is a person who can serve as a model; perhaps also to some of Israel’s foreign representatives.’¹⁴⁰

When he left the country, he received an unusual going away gift as an extraordinary honor: the planting of trees. For his, as it stated, “blessed activity in Israel,” the aforementioned Society, of which Müller-Cohen was still the chairperson, dedicated 20 trees to him in March of the year 5715, corresponding to March 1955, (in addition, the animal lover and circus devotee Hartl received three lion cubs from the Tel Aviv Zoo which he then donated to the Schönbrunn Zoo).

¹³⁹ See Helga Embacher and Margit Reiter, *Gratwanderungen. Die Beziehungen zwischen Österreich und Israel im Schatten der Vergangenheit* (Picus Verlag: Vienna, 1998), 59.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in Evelyn Adunka, *Exil in der Heimat. Über die Österreicher in Israel* (Studienverlag: Innsbruck–Wien–München–Bozen, 2002), 68.

In both of the works to date in which Karl Hartl is mentioned,¹⁴¹ reference is rightfully made to his internal reports to the Foreign Office in Vienna – and also to his letters, which provide a different picture. First and foremost, on Hartl himself. It is indisputable that the longer he was in Israel, the more critical he became toward the “official Israel” and its politicians and the less and less sympathy he felt for certain developments of the Jewish state. He had gone to Israel with the best of intentions, wanted to seek its friendship with Austria, and was then most deeply disappointed by the “official” Israel – by his own admission, he had set his sights too high. His letters sometimes read like those of a spurned lover – if one may endeavor to paint to such a picture in this context. In the end, according to his own statements, it took great efforts for him to preserve his distance as an observer.¹⁴²

Sometimes, one gets the impression that he almost also suffered under the rejections of young state which did not live up to his ideals; on the other hand, he also showed understanding for this development. At one point, he expressed to his Israeli colleague in Vienna, Arie Eshel, that the young state of Israel had to vary its goals through its dynamics “and irritate us old citizens of an old society;” or, in the same letter in April 1954, “that this vitality somewhat bewilders me and perhaps also my people, old people from an old land.”¹⁴³ Thus only he could designate himself as an antisemite. In August 1954, he once told Litigation Secretary Karl Wolf in the Austrian Foreign Ministry: “You don’t know anything at all about how healthy antisemitism is: that is what has kept me going here the last two years.”¹⁴⁴ That was not some muffled beer hall antisemitism, but rather something completely different. Only he with his spotless political biography – socialist, emigrant, married to a Jewish woman, active in the resistance against the Nazi regime – could use such wordings. Sometimes one had the impression that he was almost flirting with it and playing with the language. At one point, as early as November 1951, he even spoke of “ruminations of a lonely man.”¹⁴⁵ In the end, he just wanted to leave. In October 1954, he wrote to the envoy Freidinger-Pranter, “It would be high time that they took me away from here. I have the greatest trouble to set discrete limits on physical and spiritual decay.”¹⁴⁶

What irritates this author about Hartl is the fact that he was completely uncritical in his acceptance of the official “victim thesis” of the government in Vienna. Even in the most private of his letters, not one single time did he express doubts about this thesis. In full

¹⁴¹ Adunka, Exil, 68. Embacher and Reiter, *Gratwanderungen*, 55, 58-62, 232.

¹⁴² September 23, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 125.

¹⁴³ April 22, 1953, Volume 3, Doc. III.

¹⁴⁴ August 28, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 19.

¹⁴⁵ November 20, 1951, Volume 2, Doc. 103.

¹⁴⁶ October 11, 1954, Volume 4, Doc. 129.

understanding of the officially represented policy – back and forth with reasons of state – did he have to go so far as an Austrian official? Did he have to identify with this thesis so uncritically? Ernst Luegmayer, Hartl's successor in Tel Aviv from 1958 to 1962, who drew up rather unemotional reports, gave an example of how it could have been done and even should have been done: in a critical analysis in April 1961, he showed "what obstacles stand in the way of a favorable development of mutual relations." Those which Luegmayer listed were also known by Hartl – and this author would have wished them from him – namely:

"The greatest and most difficult problem to solve is represented by overcoming the memories of the persecution of the Jews in Austria during Nazi rule and the most broad reaching elimination possible of its consequences, that is, compensation which is recognized to be sufficient.

The events of the past naturally cannot be undone. All attempts to pass off or deny responsibility for them have only met with very limited success. Arguments under international law have caught on either not at all or only very little. The Jews who experienced the Anschluss in Austria know all too well how enthusiastically the Germans were received by a considerable portion of the Austrian population when they marched in and, what is even more regrettable, that numerous Austrians were substantially involved with the persecution of the Jews. Efforts to then declare only the Germans as guilty or the Austrians as not responsible therefore cannot be successful and even often give rise to opposite reactions, since reference is made to the fact that the Federal Republic of Germany at least recognizes its guilt and makes honest efforts to provide for reparations, while Austria attempts to dodge away with every possible flimsy pretext."¹⁴⁷

It actually was clear that this topic was also to weigh upon relations in subsequent years.

Outside of the framework of his daily work, Hartl helped the "Israelis," as he called them, in the most varied of areas. This activity did not always meet with the necessary recognition of certain Israeli circles, since Hartl did not shy away from also publicly criticizing a good many negative events of everyday life, such as religious questions, where he detected a high degree of intolerance with respect to other religions, in particular when members of the Jewish community admitted as much. He thus mentioned to an Israeli journalist that he knew of Christian church services in which Jews participated but that they had to keep it secret. He found this development to be very regrettable. His criticism was, as he himself expressed, the "criticism of a worried friend" and was viewed by some as thoroughly constructive criticism.

¹⁴⁷ April 19, 1961, Volume 6, Doc. 20.

At his departure at the end of February 1955, nearly all of the major Israeli newspapers reported about that diplomat “who felt himself to be completely one of us and in whose company one would forget that he was in the company of a foreigner and non-Jew,” as *Yedioth Hayom* wrote on March 4, 1955. Hartl’s love of the Yiddish language also contributed to this. Hartl loved this elemental and very flexible language and regretted that it was not sufficiently appreciated in Israel. And he critically said that the Israelis did not face their *gola* history – the history of the exile – with the necessary objectivity. Often enough, the *gola* was “held in contempt by you, but it was a great miracle, since it maintained the Jews throughout the millennia,” as he stated in the same newspaper. On February 18, 1955, the newspaper *Yedioth Chadashoth* wrote, “A friend takes his leave.” In the aforementioned *Yedioth Hayom*, he was called an “Israeli for five years.”

After three years of service in the central office in Vienna with Under Secretary of State Bruno Kreisky Hartl became ambassador to Ankara in 1958 and then ambassador to Belgrade in 1963, where he was also responsible for Albania. Finally, from March 1968 until his retirement in early 1975, he was once again employed in the central office in Vienna, this time as the director of the Cultural Department. Four years later, on May 19, 1979, Karl Hartl died in Wiener Neustadt.¹⁴⁸

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¹⁴⁸ Also see the personal account by Karl Hartl’s daughter, Annie Weich, “Karl Hartl,” in Heinz Kienzl and Susanne Kirchner (eds.), *Ein neuer Frühling wird in der Heimat blühen. Erinnerungen und Spurensuche. (Forschungen und Beiträge zur Wiener Stadtgeschichte, 38)*, (Vienna, 2002), 63–77. Also see Helga Embacher and Margit Reiter, *Gratwanderungen*, 58-79.