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Die Türkei 1960

Politische Berichte von Botschafter Karl Hartl

an Außenminister Bruno Kreisky

„Turkey 1960“

Political reports by Ambassador Karl Hartl to Foreign Minister Bruno Kreisky

Allow me to start not with a quote from the book I edited, but with the first sentence of August von Kral's *„The Land of Kemal Atatürk – the Development of Modern Turkey“*, published in German in Vienna in 1935.

„Although modern Turkey is exactly as old or only a little younger than the other states changed or newly created by the World War, her development and present situation are still not generally known and understood.“

Kral had served in numerous Austro-Hungarian consular posts in the Ottoman Empire since between 1894 and 1914 – Constantinople/Istanbul, Monastir/Bitola, Scutari/Shkodra, Smyrna/Izmir, Selanik/Saloniki, and as Austrian Minister to Turkey from 20 November 1924 to 30 April 1932, so he was qualified to make such a statement.

The Balkans, South-Eastern Europe and the Black Sea Region are the focus of Austrian foreign policy since 2008. This i.a. was also reflected in the state visit of H.E. Abdullah Gül to Austria from 2 to 5 May 2011. I was told by Austrian President Fischer that during her talk with the wife of Austrian president Fischer, Mrs. Gül regretted the lack of literature about Turkey in Austria. Her remark is correct – so far there is little scientific discussion and even less publications concerning Turkey in general and modern Austro-Turkish relations in particular.

Political reports of ambassadors are an interesting and neutral source of the history of any country and its relations with another. Unfortunately, most of the reports written by Austrian ambassadors are hidden in boxes in the Austrian State Archive and have never seen the light of day. So far, only the political reports from the Austrian diplomatic missions in Washington 1838-1917, Tel Aviv 1950-1976 and Addis Ababa 1949 -1991 have been edited.

The relevant rules on reporting were first laid down in 1861, when a distinction was made between

- political reports

- reports on private (individual) and administrative matters.

These rules stayed in force practically unchanged until 1 July 1994, when in view of technological progress and Austria's upcoming accession to the EU political reports were abandoned as in-depth political analysis was apparently judged no longer necessary. Since then Austria is part of a network called "correspondent européen" (COREU) and receives hundreds of these COREUs every day from Brussels.

My project had to limit itself to the year 1960, a decisive year in the history of modern Turkey. The decision was made easier as the Austrian Archive Law stipulates a statute of limitation of 30 years, that is all files 30 years and older in the Austrian State Archive are open for research – unless they are still kept secret for certain reasons. Another important aspect of the project was that all persons mentioned in the reports written by ambassador Karl Hartl are dead.

Let us recall the starting point: Turkey in 1960 was a country of 27 million inhabitants; it had joined NATO in 1952 and CENTO in 1955; in August of 1958 the country, facing enormous economic problems and foreign debt, was bailed out by a 359 Mio \$ loan (USA 234 Mio \$, OEEC 100 Mio \$, IMF 25 Mio \$). On 31 July 1959 it had applied for association with the European Economic Community, and with Cyprus becoming independent in August of 1960 prospects that this case had finally been solved looked good. In 1957 the Democratic Party of Adnan Menderes, ruling since 1950, had won 47,9% of votes and 424 seats in parliament, whereas the Republican Peoples Party of Ismet İnönü with 41 % of the vote had only 178 seats. In the spring of 1960 Menderes was apparently planning to hold manipulated elections at short notice to stay in power. A military coup on 27 May ended ten years of Menderes' rule, who towards the end of these ten years had developed from democrat to dictator.

The book looks into

- developments in Turkey in 1960
- how these events were seen and reported by Austria's ambassador
- the general problem whether diplomats are able to properly judge, report and forecast events literally in the air.

The late Karl Hartl was Austrian ambassador to Turkey from 1958 to 1963. He was born in 1909 into a socialist family in Vienna's 16th district Ottakring, today a center of Turkish immigrants in Vienna. In the 1930s he wrote three books. Like his mentor Bruno Kreisky, Hartl left Vienna in March 1938 after the Anschluss and went into exile in France. After World War II he joined the Austrian mission in Paris where he was in charge of

repatriating Austrian POWs. From 1950 to 1955 he was the first Austrian representative to Israel. After his return to Vienna, he was private secretary of state secretary Bruno Kreisky until 1958, when he was appointed ambassador to Turkey. Hartl, who was well-read, did not shy away, when necessary to intervene and correct Kreisky when the latter came up with a wrong quotation.

This close relationship with Kreisky explains why, when on 23 July 1959 Kreisky became the first Austrian foreign minister since 1923 (between 1923 and 1959 it had been a directorate-general in the Federal Chancellery), Hartl could write very candid and well-researched reports – which can easily be distinguished from the reports written by other Austrian ambassadors of the time. Although he had been his chef de cabinet, Hartl's relationship with Kreisky was sometimes uneasy. In the second volume of his memoirs „*In the stream of politics*“, Kreisky describes Hartl as „*comical and brilliantly witty*“. It was Hartl who from his experience in Israel drew Kreisky's attention to the Near East problem, which as we all know, later was to become a fundamental vocation of Chancellor Kreisky. So in a way, Hartl is at the beginning of Austrian Middle Eastern politics

His 52 political reports written in 1960 in Ankara and Yeniköy on the Bospurus reprinted in this edition are not only very outspoken, they are of a high literary, even philosophical quality too. They also allow an insight into the rather topical question whether ambassadors are able to understand events in the country they are living, in particular when political change – like in many Arab countries today - is literally in the air, whether they report thereon – and whether their forecasts turn out to be correct.

Hartl began his posting in Ankara under the very best circumstances an Austrian ambassador could have. The brother of Mrs. Menderes, Samim İzzet Yemişçiabaşı, had since 1954 been Turkish minister to Vienna, and from 1957 to 1961 Turkish ambassador to Austria. He knew Hartl in his capacity as secretary of Bruno Kreisky.

When Hartl was received by Prime Minister Adnan Menderes on 11 July 1958 late in the evening, Austria „*enjoyed general goodwill*“. The prime minister's wife, Evliyazade Fatma Berin Hanim, was in Vienna at the time with their 12 year old son, staying with her ambassador-brother and her mother Evilyazade Naciye Hanim; her problem, as Hartl learned from the prime minister, was to find in Vienna a Turkish child of same age for the son. At the end of the meeting which took place in a very relaxed atmosphere Hartl concluded „*the smart and strong man of Turkey, the semi-dictator, when he was, as it were, speaking about wife, child and hobbies in slippers and shirt-sleeved – as pulling down and building is his hobby – he is exceptionally charming and human.*“

In 1960 Turkish foreign ministers were Fatin Rüstü Zorlu, and after the coup of 27 May Selim Rauf Sarper. Hartl was frequently received by Secretary-General Zeki Kuneralp, and his successor Namik Kemal Yolga. It was with Yolga in particular that he established an excellent working relationship. Hartl was 5 years older than Yolga, who in 1940 had been vice-consul at the Turkish embassy in Paris, where he saved Turkish Jews from persecution by Nazi Germany. His endeavours earned him the title „Turkish Schindler“ and the award of „Righteous among nations“ by Israel. Hartl had spent the years 1938-1945 with his family in exile in Southern France, his wife Dr. Franziska Grünhut was Jewish, so he was in a position to judge and appreciate Yolga's actions.

On 1 March Hartl wrote a lengthy analysis on the social situation in Turkey, apparently upon instructions from Bruno Kreisky. As he found the official information to be more based on propaganda than on facts, he contacted opposition MPs and professors of Ankara University to gather the required information: *„So my search led me to the intellectuals, to the people of the university...“*. Hartl realized that the 2 political parties, Menderes' Democratic Party and the Republican People's Party (Inönü) were *„ideologically not far apart, and divided only by their claim to exercise political power.“*

He saw the new problems of Turkish society, which needed to be solved, in

- industrialisation
- the enormous population growth (3 - 4 % per annum)
- emigration to the cities
- minority problem of the Kurdish part of the nation

„The Turkish peasant is a poor man, who however realizes how poor he is only when he is leaving his village. Not only the army is driving on the roads built by Mr. Menderes, social change is marching as well. Poverty and wealth is really confronting each other the big cities. At lot is being built in Istanbul and Ankara – but the wrong way. The banks – and they are usually the clients – are building modern flats, which are excessively expensive even for the middle class. They are then rented out to civil servants, officers and political protégés, who never move into these apartments, stay in their old ones, and rent them at horrendous leases to foreigners. 2/3 of the diplomatic personnel and the majority of the foreign, quite numerous missions are staying in such apartments.“

On 14 April 1960 Hartl was in for a real surprise. From 4 to 8 April Austrian President Adolf Schärf had paid a state visit to Sweden, followed by one to Finland until 12 April. It seems that in Stockholm or Helsinki he had a conversation with the Turkish ambassador, and in the small talk regretted never having been to Turkey. Turkish diplomacy acted promptly

and swiftly – on 15 April secretary – general Kunalalp surprised Hartl with the news that President Bayar had invited President Schärff to an official visit to Turkey. The visit never took place, and it was only in 1996 that the first Austrian president, Thomas Klestil, paid a state visit to Turkey.

In the following weeks Hartl reported on the political situation which soon reached its climax. On 25 May Hartl informed Vienna:

„the Menderes regime has come to its end. The question is not if, it is only when and how the end will happen. Menderes has, as I have already assumed, cancelled his trip to Athens. From the point of internal politics he could not have risked to leave the country ... I assume that he will not travel to Paris either, and I have doubts about his trip to Moscow. It would be better this trip would not take place, if Menderes will still exist at that time...“

He had realized that *„it is not only the Turkish army driving on the roads built by Mr. Menderes, social change is marching there as well.“*

The turning away from Atatürk's laicism and a *„return to Islam“*, which became manifest in the Menderes era was interpreted by Hartl as *„a longing for, an escape into old security“*. (Doc.9). As far as Kemalism was concerned, Hartl regarded it not so much as an ideology but as *„a very meagre program and a very strong practice.“*

His report had not yet arrived in Vienna at the desk of foreign minister Kreisky, when on 27 May the era of Menderes did come to its end. I recently met our former secretary – general for foreign affairs who in 1960 had been third secretary in the office of the then secretary-general – who was very surprised to see that Karl Hartl had actually predicted a military coup in Ankara. His report led to a rather un-Austrian phenomenon – the secretary-general and the political director general quarrelled whose task it was to send Hartl a letter of appreciation.

Three days after the coup, on 30 May Hartl in a first detailed report about the events concluded:

„The officers have little trust in politicians, however a lot of trust in democracy; the intellectuals react in the same manner. It is somehow touching to see how upon request of General Gürsel professors are now sitting together with the officers' committee, in order to work out within a deadline of a few weeks a constitution secure from any authoritarian attack. As I hear, three constitutions are going to be taken apart and from their best pieces the Second Turkish Republic shall be assembled. The rebuilding of the constitution will start from rock-bottom.“

A socialist by conviction, Hartl took a keen interest in the developments that led to the military coup and its follow up, leading to the constitution of 1961, drawing philosophical comparisons with the French Revolution. Having spent World War II in exile in France, and having been in charge to repatriate Austrian POWs after WW II, he was not a keen admirer of the military, and yet he was able to establish excellent contacts with them, particularly with general Gürsel, partly due to coincidence. When General Gürsel on 6 June 1960 received the heads of foreign diplomatic missions in Ankara, it turned out that Hartl looked like a double of a Turkish major who had been killed in the Korean War, leading General Gürsel to address the Austrian ambassador as „young friend“. General Gürsel was aware that Hartl had had contacts with opposition members and intellectuals before the coup and told him so, asking him „*what would have happened if things would not have happened the way they happened?*“ Hartl replied: *“It would have been a mishap for me – but a tragedy for the Turkish people.”* (36-POL/60).

Hartl was convinced *“that the Turkish officer is actually a citizen in uniform.”*

In a report of 15 June 1960 Hartl took a philosophical approach asking whether revolutions take place according to the book.

„The initial phase of the Turkish radical change followed a concept like in the schoolbook. Nearly without victims, everything going like clockwork – after a bare 6 hours the officers had the power in their hands. Not only that, they assured, as paladins of a law that had been dishonoured, to hurry to return this power to the freely elected representatives of the people. As soon as possible, after a month, or two, if this will be possible, and I believe they are serious about it.

To use a metaphor: the officers acted like a referee in a football match. Government and opposition were fighting a decisive game, the army as referee had already pointed out to a few violations of the rules of the game, and when the game turned into a fight, which had nothing to do with the rules of the game, the referee blew the whistle for the end of the game and sent both teams to the cubicle. Both teams, as opposition parties too are forbidden any political activities until further notice.”

In the middle of August 1960 Hartl shared with the Austrian foreign ministry an anecdote his Italian colleague Conte Massimo Magistrati – who 20 years earlier had been a close collaborator of Italian Duce Mussolini - had told him about his conversation with General Gürsel:

Magistrati: *„If the government submits a new draft law, you, Excellency, sign it as head of government.”*

Gürsel: „Yes“

Magistrati: „And if this draft law becomes law by decision of the national committee you sign it as chairman of the national committee?“

Gürsel: „Yes“

Magistrati: „And you countersign the law as head of state?“

Gürsel: „Yes – and don't you find that practical?“

Magistrati swore that his story is not invented and Hartl believed him, as it reflected the factual and probably necessary situation.

Hartl was aware that the committee of national unity had – in the name of liberty – reduced civil liberties. „I limit myself to the statement, that the one who rings the bell at 5 o'clock in the morning is not necessarily the milkman.“

On 13 November 1960 a group of 14 radical members of the original 38 officers - members of the Committee of National Unity were purged.

Hartl commented: „Were I to give a name to this new development of 13 November, the best I could come up with would be 9th Thermidor (27 July 1794 or 9 Thermidor of year II, which with the fall of Robespierre ended the regime du terreur of the French Revolution.) A group radically pressing ahead, whose ideas and intentions are not in line with the political, economic, and in particular the average state of consciousness is removed by a less imaginative but more realistic majority. As the Turkish Thermidor has not been preceded by terror, repression too will be softer, although I simply cannot believe the story that the young officers removed from the committee and the army will be sent into a more or less golden exile as special advisors to Turkish missions abroad. There are probably no such discreet Thermidors.

I have made an appointment with General Ismet İnönü to be in a position to write a more detailed report of the new developments, as the action was what he would have wished, if he did not happen following his advice anyway. A big obstacle has been removed for the conservative coach and it seems important to me to talk directly to the coachman.“ – the word coachman is understood in the sense of Prince Metternich, called coachman of Europe from 1815 to 1848.

In his next report Hartl admits to have had doubts that the young officers were actually being given a golden exile. In the end, they were all put aboard planes and sent abroad.

„The action seems to have been a full success – not only the evacuation of the trouble-makers, but also the pacification for a bigger part thereof for the future; I am told, that some exiled have accepted their comfortable fate, as most of the low-ranking officers appreciate the

advantages of a very high standard of living without any obligation (getting a salary of between 700 and 1300 US \$)... “

„The Turkish Thermidor is still without a Bonaparte. It does not seem to me to be excluded that the executive organ of local social necessities should be a person, who will like it or not have to be accepted by old politicians remote from the people, and although not a Bonaparte, a general is already here; saying this I do not promise a Napoleon. “

Hartl's last report of 1960 carries the date 17 December. He promised Foreign Minister Kreisky a short report – as Christmas was near – on how Turkey is doing in terms of the new constitution – it was the longest he wrote in that year, indicating that he was somewhat lost as to how things would go on in 1961.

Hartl's last political report as Austrian ambassador to Turkey deals with the overall foreign policy situation of Turkey and is dated 9 September 1963. In the last line he quotes Foreign Minister Erkin who expressed Turkey's satisfaction about her association to the EEC. The association agreement was signed in Ankara on 12 September 1963 after 4 years of negotiations.

Karl Hartl left Ankara on 27 October 1963, having witnessed a highly interesting period of modern Turkish history, when the foundations were laid for today's Turkey. He served as ambassador to Yugoslavia until 1968, when he became director of the foreign ministry's Middle East division and in 1970 the first director general for cultural affairs of the newly established cultural division of the Foreign Ministry.

Having reached the mandatory retirement age of 65 at the end of 1974, Karl Hartl split his time between Vienna and an old farm house in Pitten, Lower Austria, 60 km south of Vienna. Although Hartl had quit the Catholic Church as a young man, the well-read Hartl who knew the Bible well, assisted the local parish priest in writing Sunday's sermon.

Let me conclude by again quoting from August von Kral's book, whose last paragraph reads: *„She – that is the Turkish nation – and Europe as well both have every reason to be pleased with the new way Turkey started under him (Atatürk) and the successes achieved. The great construction work has fulfilled the plan emanating from the spirit of Kemal Atatürk, never given up by him and implemented by an iron will until the end, to transform the Turkish Empire according to the principles of the Western world's civilisation and culture, whose powerful penetration in this former bulwark of Asiatic customs and thinking has enriched Europe with a new state which has become European. “*