



# Continuities and Discontinuities in the Austrian Catholic Orient Mission to Palestine, 1915–1938

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Austrian relations to Palestine have a long historical tradition.<sup>1</sup> “Even though our Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was shattered by the Great War, our glorious history could not be taken from us. Great and holy memories link us to the Holy Land, too”.<sup>2</sup> However, the parameters within which they shifted during those decades between the end of the Habsburg Monarchy and the years of a visible Near East policy under the Socialist Chancellor Bruno Kreisky in the 1970s have seldom been the subject of historical analysis and consideration.<sup>3</sup> The concept of Austria had changed fundamentally: from the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy, which ranked as one of the European

<sup>1</sup>The author wishes to thank Stephan Kurz, Walter Lukaseder, Robert Rill, Jonathan Singerton, Edward Wilson, and Helmut Wohnout for their support.

<sup>2</sup>*Österreichische Pilgerbriefe* 3 (April–June 1934), 10.

<sup>3</sup>This is due not least to the traditional ‘internal’ orientation of Austrian contemporary historiography. For a summary of relations in the inter-war years, see Robert Rill, “Österreich und das Heilige Land in der Ersten Republik,” in *Mit Szepter und Pilgerstab. Österreichische Präsenz im Heiligen Land seit den Tagen Kaiser Franz Josefs*, ed. Bernhard A. Böhler (Vienna: Katalogbuch, 2000); Rolf Steininger, ed., *Berichte aus Jerusalem II: 1927–1938*, eds. Rolf Steininger and Rudolf Agstner (Munich: Olzog Verlag, 2004). These volumes contain interesting photographs.

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Great Powers, to a small nation at the heart of Europe, whose inhabitants only learned to accept this state without reservations after 1945. In view of the unclarified relationship with Germany,<sup>4</sup> the initially hesitant establishment of a new Austrian consciousness after 1918 primarily occurred by emphasising landscape, history and culture from the outset.<sup>5</sup> To this extent, a certain way of thinking in large spaces remained, although the young republic still had to find its place on the international stage. The fact that Austria's foreign situation and policy between 1918 and 1938 were largely determined by others affected this process for a long time.<sup>6</sup>

The Austrian First Republic did not have any colonial and imperialist past in the classic sense and certainly not a colonial present. As regards Palestine, Consul General Walter Haas spoke repeatedly during his tenure in Jerusalem (1927–1933) of the “triviality of Austrian political interests”.<sup>7</sup> From 1920 to 1938 a member of the League of Nations, Austria was far removed from the powerful political influence of a mandate state, but not uninterested in maintaining old spheres of influence in the Middle East.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it stood aside from the “two sides of the Janus-faced mandate state – on the one hand, the language of tutelage and accommodation; on the other, that of stark violence”.<sup>9</sup> The Republic of Austria, whose politicians immediately focused on economic issues because of the prevailing hardship, was in Palestine rather the inheritor of the Orient mission of the Catholic Habsburg Monarchy. This mission branch embraced an abiding mentality, expressed in an observation by the Viennese General Commissioner for the Holy Land Father Pirmin Hasenöhrle in 1933: work for the Holy Land was “not simply a matter of

<sup>4</sup>Until the Treaty of Saint Germain, the republic initially called itself ‘German Austria’ (*Deutschösterreich*). The Geneva Protocols (1922) and the Treaty of Lausanne (1932), which both provided indispensable aid from the League of Nations, prohibited the unification of Austria and Germany.

<sup>5</sup>See Ernst Bruckmüller, “Kleinstaat Österreich – Ablehnung und (langsame) Akzeptanz,” in *Österreich. 90 Jahre Republik. Beitragsband der Ausstellung im Parlament*, eds. Stefan Karner and Lorenz Mikoletzky (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2008), 607, 605.

<sup>6</sup>See Arnold Suppan, “Österreich und seine Nachbarn 1918–1938,” *ibid.*, 499.

<sup>7</sup>No. 34, 26 June 1929: Walter Haas (Jerusalem) to Ernst Streeruwitz (Vienna), in Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 218–221, here 220; also No. 31, 6 March 1929: Walter Haas (Jerusalem) to Ignaz Seipel (Vienna), *ibid.*, 211–214, here 213.

<sup>8</sup>This awareness permeates the first book, written by a diplomat, providing insight into the history of relations between Austria and the Levantine area: ‘Institutions, foundations, and gifts of the most varying kinds, then the masses of pilgrims from Austria, then high and supreme visitors, all of this gave Austria a strong moral position in the Holy Land. Not suspect of any imperialist or colonialist intentions, our weight increased as the Christian power maintaining the best relations to Turks and Arabs and that has also done a lot of good for the Jews.’ Arthur Breycha-Vauthier, *Österreich in der Levante. Geschichte und Geschichten einer alten Freundschaft* (Vienna and Munich: Verlag Herold, 1972), 59.

<sup>9</sup>Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan, “Introduction,” in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates*, eds. Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), 1–23, here 5.

material things, but rather of the holiest assets of our holy faith and the most precious legacies of the early Church".<sup>10</sup>

For however dramatic the political and social changes—from the disintegration of Austria-Hungary there emerged Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, Romania, the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (Yugoslavia after 1929), and Poland—they had not been able to change the Catholic nature of the Austrian Alpine lands. Despite the secular trend observable during the interwar years, according to the first Austrian-wide religious statistics, which were compiled as part of the 1934 census, the share of Catholics in the Republic of Austria came to just over 90%. So, Austria was in line with countries such as France and Italy, as was stressed at the time.<sup>11</sup> The old alliance between the throne and the altar had come to an end with Habsburg rule. In the context of the political Catholicism of the interwar years, the traditional symbiosis of church and state had shifted to the strong Christian Social Party, founded in 1891/1893 and dissolved in the autumn of 1934. A governing party even at the time of the monarchy, it understood itself to be “the worldly arm of the Catholic Church, whose social hegemony used to be protected by the ruling dynasty”.<sup>12</sup>

### ACTORS, STRUCTURES, AND GOALS IN THE LATE HABSBURG MONARCHY

The fact that the multi-confessional Habsburg Monarchy was perceived internally and externally as a Catholic Great Power had major repercussions for its international position.<sup>13</sup> Due to its direct proximity, the Habsburg Monarchy had always had a multi-faceted relationship with the Ottoman Empire. This included the conclusion of capitulation treaties, in which the Austrian religious protectorate in the region was laid down in international law. In the first half of the nineteenth century, under State Chancellor Metternich,

<sup>10</sup>P. Pirmin Hasenöhr, O. F. M., “Ein Blick in das General-Kommissariat des Heiligen Landes in Wien,” *300 Jahre Generalkommissariat des Heiligen Landes in Wien. Jubiläumsnummer der Österreichischen Pilgerbriefe* (April–June 1933), 60–71, here 66.

<sup>11</sup>See Andreas Weigl, “Katholische Bastionen. Die konfessionellen Verhältnisse vom Vorabend des Ersten Weltkriegs bis in die frühen 1920er-Jahre,” in ... *der Rest ist Österreich. Das Werden der Ersten Republik*, eds. Helmut Konrad and Wolfgang Maderthaler, vol. 1 (Vienna: Carl Gerold's Sohn Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2008), 381. Regarding Italy and France, see the contributions of Roberto Mazza and Dominique Trimbur in this volume.

<sup>12</sup>Helmut Wohnout, “Bürgerliche Regierungspartei und weltlicher Arm der katholischen Kirche. Die Christlichsozialen in Österreich 1918–1934,” in *Christdemokratie in Europa im 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Michael Gehler, Wolfram Kaiser, and Helmut Wohnout (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2001), 186.

<sup>13</sup>“How a state sees itself affects the ways in which it relates to other states [...] and how it comes to understand its interests and objectives.” Andrew J. Rotter, “Culture,” in *Palgrave Advances in International History*, ed. Patrick Finney (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 269.

Austria took part in the “rediscovery” of the Holy Land, positioning itself behind France as the second Catholic power in the intensifying European competition for influence.<sup>14</sup>

The Austrian Orient mission in Palestine was always headed by differing protagonists and did not produce any central mission society. It depended on enclaves of institutional and personnel embeddedness on the spot, on the one hand, and on the mobilisation of the population of the Habsburg Monarchy, on the other. Both components were already present in the sphere of activity of the oldest link to the Holy Land: the Vienna General Commissioner’s Office for the Holy Land, still located in the Franciscan Monastery in Vienna. It was founded in 1633 as a liaison to the Franciscan Custody and re-established in 1843 under the protectorate of the archbishop of Vienna. The responsibilities of the general commissioner were manifold, ranging from forwarding alms and recruiting missionaries from the Order of Saint Francis, maintaining interests in the mission of the Holy Land and the holy sites, to organising pilgrimages.<sup>15</sup>

Besides this office, a few institutions existed in the Holy Land from the nineteenth century onwards. The most prominent was the Austrian hospice, opened in the Old City of Jerusalem in 1863. It has visibly represented Austria up to this day. The prestige object of a “national homestead in the Holy Land”<sup>16</sup> under the aegis of the archbishop of Vienna was run by secular priests. Only one other institution, the Maltese infirmary in Tantur near Bethlehem, was under Austro-Hungarian protection. Tantur was the life-long project of Consul Bernhard Count Caboga-Cerva, to which the Bohemian grand priory of the Order of the Knights of Malta made substantial financial contributions. Nevertheless, the administration of the house, opened in 1876/1877, was taken over by the Order of St John of God in 1879. After 1882/1884, monks of the Order also worked in Nazareth, and the destinies of both institutions remained closely linked until 1920. Despite many efforts, the hospital in Nazareth and the mission station in Gaza—founded in 1879 by the Tyrolean secular priest Georg Gatt and in the wake of the Great War surrendered to the Latin Patriarchate—were never placed under Imperial and Royal protection.

All the Austrian institutions in Palestine were given support by the consulate in Jerusalem, which was established as a vice-consulate in 1849 and elevated to the status of a consulate in 1852. The vast majority of persons receiving protection from the I. (&) R. consulate were Jews. During the First World War, when Vienna was focusing on regaining influence on Jewish institutions in Jerusalem, Consul Friedrich Kraus rendered outstanding services to the distressed Jewish population. At the same time, Austro-Hungarian troops

<sup>14</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, see Barbara Haider-Wilson, *Österreichs friedlicher Kreuzzug 1839–1917* (in preparation).

<sup>15</sup>See Hasenöhrl, O. F. M., “Ein Blick in das General-Kommissariat,” 64–65.

<sup>16</sup>*Österreichische Pilgerbriefe* 4 (April–September 1935), 21.

also displayed compassion. When a cholera epidemic broke out in the area of Bir as-Saba' (Be'er Sheva) in the autumn of 1916, with additional isolated cases of typhoid, the I. & R. reserve hospital in Jerusalem immediately dispatched a medical detachment to the endangered region. Aid for the civilian population was regarded as a major assignment, particularly in the form of vaccinations. In Bethlehem, excess bread baked by Austro-Hungarian military cooks was distributed to the poor in the town. Aged residents mentioned this episode even in the final decade of the twentieth century: "When the Austrians were here, we always had bread!"<sup>17</sup>

The history of relations between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Holy Land was characterised by the commitment of state protagonists (foreign ministers, diplomats, consuls) and non-state actors. The establishment of spheres of influence in the Holy Land was closely linked to issues of prestige as a Catholic Great Power. Regardless of political vicissitudes, it was supported by the Catholic population. The different options to express support for what was called the "peaceful crusade" included going on pilgrimages, later undertaken also in larger groups. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Heinrich Himmel von Agisburg developed in Tyrol the concept of so-called people's pilgrimages, whose tight organisation and low price enabled groups of 500 pilgrims to visit the Holy Land. These journeys were national demonstrations, making a great impression on the local population.<sup>18</sup>

Due to its protagonists, the Austrian share of mission work in the Holy Land largely consisted of contributions to infrastructural projects assigned to the so-called medical mission. They provided healthcare for members of all confessions, reaching all segments of the population. This was the agenda of the Order of St John of God.<sup>19</sup> Thus positioned, it was evidently relatively easy to build up a relationship of trust with the (rural) populace. With the exception of the one-man activities by Georg Gatt in Gaza, participating in the school system in Palestine was not up for discussion. However, long before Gatt the Austrian Orient mission was already making a contribution towards the "education" of the populace, as the first institution in Jerusalem funded by Austrian money was a printing house in the Franciscan monastery of St Salvator. In a cooperation between the Austrian Franciscan missionary Father Sebastian Frötschner and the general commissioner at the time, it had been set up in 1846<sup>20</sup> as a response to the active Protestant mission.

<sup>17</sup>Peter Jung, "Die Präsenz Österreich-Ungarns „Bewaffneter Macht“ im Heiligen Land bis 1918," in *Mit Szepter und Pilgerstab. Österreichische Präsenz im Heiligen Land seit den Tagen Kaiser Franz Josefs*, ed. Bernhard A. Böhler (Vienna: Katalogbuch, 2000), 325.

<sup>18</sup>The sources repeatedly show the assessment that the "Orientals" attached special significance to external appearances. Therefore, in the eyes of the Europeans, they were easily impressionable.

<sup>19</sup>See Friedrich Läufer, ed., *Die Barmherzigen Brüder. Ein Buch über Entstehen, Werden und Wirken des Ordens der Barmherzigen Brüder. Allen Menschenfreunden dargeboten* (Vienna: Selbstverlag des Provinzialates der Barmherzigen Brüder, 1931), 4.

<sup>20</sup>According to the Austrian Franciscan sources. In contrast, see the chapter of Maria Chiara Rioli and Riccardo Castagnetti in this volume.

Equipped with Arabic and Latin letters, it was meant to print mainly Arabic schoolbooks and other religious works with Catholic content. After years of conflicts concerning competences, the printing house, which did not fit in with the pattern of national institutions, was finally taken over by the Custody in 1876.

It was only in the early twentieth century that the economic interests of the Habsburg Monarchy came to the fore in relations with Palestine. Then, discussions concerning the religious protectorate were revived in Vienna, fuelled by the First World War, above all the expulsion of missionaries hailing from the Entente Powers and the brotherhood of arms with the German and Ottoman Empires. The mission was dear to the heart of the Prince Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Friedrich (Gustav) Piffl. In November 1915, he convened a mission conference, representing the climax of the joint proceeding of church and state, of mission and foreign policy. The theologian and founder of Catholic Mission Science in Münster, Joseph Schmidlin, was one of the German participants in the conference. He was the driver behind the accelerated mission efforts prior to and during the First World War. The meeting in the Archiepiscopal Palace in Vienna signalled the launch of the so-called Orient Action. Partly also due to the desired joint approach with Germany, it soon faced failure, as a special competition had developed between the allied Habsburg Monarchy and German Empire during the course of the war.<sup>21</sup> During the years of the war, even Austro-Hungarian diplomats emphasised the, in their view, more tactful Austrian behaviour towards the local population.

In 1917, the Austro-Hungarian War Office also participated in plans for the Orient and Catholic aspirations with the so-called Orient Mission. The group dispatched to the Near East at the time, which was in Jerusalem in October, was headed by a young Habsburg archduke and the Orientalist and prelate Alois Musil. Musil, another participant in Piffl's mission conference in 1915, was Austria's "bond to the Arab world".<sup>22</sup> A professor at the Theological Faculty of Vienna University since 1909, but employed in Prague after the war, he had studied Oriental languages in Jerusalem in 1895, later acquiring a reputation as an Arabian specialist with several expeditions and diverse publications under his belt. As a close confidant of the imperial family,

<sup>21</sup>A look through the *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, founded by Schmidlin in 1911, proves the partition of the Austrian and the German Orient missions after 1918. The years before illustrate the transnational Austro-German proceeding in the Catholic Orient mission. See *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 8 (1918)–27 (1937).

<sup>22</sup>Breycha-Vauthier, *Österreich in der Levante*, 44. 1918 saw the publication of the relatively unknown treatise by Alois Musil, *Zur Zeitgeschichte von Arabien* (Leipzig and Vienna: Verlag S. Hirzel—Manz-Verlag, 1918), in which Musil analysed: "By years of targeted activity, Syria and Palestine have been transformed into volcanic areas for politics. In no other Ottoman province has there been as much British and French political propaganda as in Syria and Palestine, although both countries are completely immature for autonomous political activity." *Ibid.*, 92.

he influenced Austro-Hungarian Oriental policy, sometimes becoming the adversary of T. E. Lawrence.

Strikingly few documents are available about the “Orient Mission” of 1917, but those extant reveal the significance attached to cultivating the image of the Habsburg Monarchy in the region. While visiting, inspecting and motivating Austro-Hungarian troops and charitable institutions were the ostensible tasks, the Viennese Catholic propaganda behind the operation was to be concealed. In the course of the journey, more than 200 awards were bestowed on soldiers and civilians. In the Holy Land, not only the Austro-Hungarian pool of missionaries was taken into account, but also the local population, above all meritorious employees of the I. & R. consular offices. In this operation, initiated shortly before the demise of the Habsburg Monarchy, an early form of “cultural diplomacy” can be identified. Conceived, planned and executed by state and dynastic agencies under the influence of Musil, it was quite deliberately aimed at the population on the spot.

#### FROM TURMOIL TO THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE REPUBLIC—A NEW BEGINNING IN PALESTINE?

From 1849 to 1917, the Habsburg Monarchy was represented with its own (vice-)consulate in Jerusalem, and there were other offices in Acri-Caiffa (Akko-Haifa) and Jaffa. The closure of the consulate in Jerusalem was followed by a provisional period of ten years. Business was initially conducted by the Spanish consul, and in 1922 the physician Oscar Stross in Alexandria was appointed Austrian honorary consul for Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. However, in 1927 a professional consulate was again set up in Jerusalem, after the Austrian ambassador in London had already sent a corresponding inquiry to the Foreign Office in London on 17 December 1924.<sup>23</sup> So, Austria was again present in the international game of politics and religion taking place on the territory of Jerusalem. The Christian Social Chancellor Prelate Ignaz Seipel could interpret Austria’s changed position positively in that he saw in two points a special significance for missions operated by small and poor states or states without any colonies: their missionaries enjoyed more confidence among the local people, and in the event of an outbreak of war between the Great Powers, they would not have to leave.<sup>24</sup> Seipel placed a clear accent on foreign policy and was elected in 1928 as one of the vice-presidents of the League of Nations. His participation in the pilgrimage by Austrian graduates was planned for 1928, but it was only in the year of his death (1932) that

<sup>23</sup>See Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 19–20; Rudolf Agstner, “Österreichs Konsulate im Heiligen Land,” in *Mit Szepter und Pilgerstab. Österreichische Präsenz im Heiligen Land seit den Tagen Kaiser Franz Josephs*, ed. Bernhard A. Böhrer (Vienna: Katalogbuch, 2000).

<sup>24</sup>See [Ignaz] Seipel, “Mission und Weltpolitik,” *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 20 (1930): 44–46, here 45–46.

Seipel really arrived in the Holy Land—albeit privately and only for one day.<sup>25</sup> Public excitement about this matter underlines once more that pilgrimages by high-ranking personalities always had a political and propagandistic dimension, causing an international stir.

After November 1918, the disbanding of I. & R. diplomacy took two years. Of the 433 civil servants of the I. & R. Ministry of External Affairs, about half were retired, 105 were accepted into the Foreign Service of the Republic of (German) Austria and another quarter by other successor states. The reduction in representation abroad illustrates the scale of the change: of 29 embassies and missions and 112 consulates in 1914, only 14 embassies, five consulates general, six consulates, two passport offices and one authorised representation remained in 1924. In the following years, six more embassies and the consulate in Jerusalem were set up.<sup>26</sup> The application to re-establish a professional consulate in Jerusalem with the agreement of the British government was made in the council of ministers on 3 March 1927 “for political and economic reasons”.<sup>27</sup> By contrast, the instructions for the first Imperial Royal vice-consul stated that the establishment of a vice-consulate in Jerusalem “lacked a commercial reasoning, but seemed all the more advisable for political and religious considerations”.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the sizeable Austrian Jewish community, in the self-understanding of the Habsburg Monarchy it would have been impossible to appoint a Jew as the Austrian representative in Jerusalem. Not least because of the position taken by the Vatican, continuity prevailed into the interwar years.

<sup>25</sup>See Rill, “Österreich und das Heilige Land,” 347; No. 929: Gesandter Egger to Bundeskanzler Seipel, Rome, 18 June 1928, No. 932: Generalsekretär Peter to Gesandten Egger (Rome), Vienna, 23 June 1928, in *Außenpolitische Dokumente der Republik Österreich 1918–1938 (ADÖ), vol. 6: Jahre der Souveränität 16. Juni 1926 bis 11. Februar 1930*, eds. Klaus Koch, Walter Rauscher, and Arnold Suppan (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik – R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2004), 334–336, here 334–335, 338–339, here 339; No. 25, 30 August 1928: Walter Haas (Jerusalem) to Ignaz Seipel (Vienna), in Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 198–199. The pilgrimage of Austrian graduates in 1928 comprised 183 persons. Whilst 69 priests embarked on the journey to the Holy Land, Seipel was kept away by an intervention by the Pope. See *Mit Akademikern ins Heilige Land. Die erste Pilgerfahrt österreichischer Akademiker ins Heilige Land* (Vienna: Verlag Akademische Rompilgerschaft, 1928), 5, 12, 11.

<sup>26</sup>See Walter Rauscher, “Struktur und Organisation des österreichischen Auswärtigen Dienstes 1918 bis 1938,” in *Außenpolitische Dokumente der Republik Österreich 1918–1938 (ADÖ), vol. 1: Selbstbestimmung der Republik 21. Oktober 1918 bis 14. März 1919*, eds. Klaus Koch, Walter Rauscher, and Arnold Suppan (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik – R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1993), 17, 26–27.

<sup>27</sup>See No. 483 (3 March 1927), in *Protokolle des Ministerrates der Ersten Republik, Abteilung V, 20. Oktober 1926 bis 4. Mai 1929, vol. 1: Kabinett Dr. Ignaz Seipel, 21. Oktober 1926 bis 29. Juli 1927*, ed. Eszter Dorner-Brader (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Staatsdruckerei, 1983), 276–298, here 280.

<sup>28</sup>No. 5: Stürmer to Pizzamano (Constantinople, 9 January 1849), in *Österreich und das Heilige Land. Ausgewählte Konsulatsdokumente aus Jerusalem 1849–1917*, ed. Mordechai Eliav in collaboration with Barbara Haider (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), 107–110, here 107.



The Austrian ambassador to the Holy See from 1920 to 1928, Ludwig von Pastor, only faced great indignation once, when in 1922 rumours emerged about the possible appointment of a Jew as Austrian consul in Jerusalem. State Secretary Pietro Gasparri made it unmistakably clear that a Catholic state might never take a step contributing towards strengthening the Zionist movement.<sup>29</sup>

The first consul was finally Walter Haas, who could draw on experiences from his years at the I. & R. consulate general in Beirut (1911–1914).<sup>30</sup> In Jerusalem, he encountered an influential member of the Catholic Church, who hailed from Upper Austria. Franz Fellingner<sup>31</sup> not only acted as the rector of the Austrian hospice again after 1913 but also as an experienced mission priest of the Latin Patriarchate. He repeatedly headed the Catholic Church in Jerusalem, which was given a new patriarch in 1920 with Luigi Barlassina. The first time was during Allenby's entrance in 1917 as the pro-vicar general and then as suffragan bishop after 1929. From the outset, the relationship between Haas and Fellingner was not devoid of friction, but the consul did not hesitate to see Fellingner's selection as suffragan bishop as "undoubtedly a prestige win for which not only the main interested parties, i.e. Great Britain, France, and Spain, envy us, but also the 'new Catholic' powers Poland and Czechoslovakia".<sup>32</sup>

Haas' work was always concerned with the few Austrian cultural institutions in the Holy Land: the hospice in Jerusalem and the branch of the Order of St John of God in Nazareth, but also with the latter's hospital in Tantur, which had in the meantime been lost. At the same time, the question arose as to the legacy of the Catholic Habsburg Monarchy in the Holy Land. The Czechoslovak consul in particular exploited the straitened material situation of the two existing institutions to proceed pro-actively.<sup>33</sup> Regarding

<sup>29</sup>See Andreas Gottsmann, "Ludwig von Pastor und Enrico Sabilia – Diplomatie im Dienste des katholischen Österreich," in *Italien und Österreich im Mitteleuropa der Zwischenkriegszeit / Italia e Austria nella Mitteleuropa tra le due guerre mondiali*, eds. Maddalena Guiotto and Helmut Wohnout (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2018), 282.

<sup>30</sup>For the years 1927 to 1933, see Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 19–29. For the biography of Haas, see Rudolf Agstner, Gertrude Enderle-Burcel and Michaela Follner, *Österreichs Spitzendiplomaten zwischen Kaiser und Kreisky. Biographisches Handbuch der Diplomaten des Höheren Auswärtigen Dienstes 1918 bis 1959* (Vienna: Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes, Österreichische Gesellschaft für historische Quellenstudien, 2009), 218–219.

<sup>31</sup>See Helmut Wohnout, "Franz Fellingner – ein österreichischer Kirchenmann im Jerusalem des Ersten Weltkrieges," in *Von der Kunst der Sprache. Aus dem Alltag eines Kirchenhistorikers. Festschrift für Rupert Klieber*, ed. Markus Holzweber (Vienna: danzig & unfried, 2019), 365–381.

<sup>32</sup>No. 31, 6 March 1929: Walter Haas (Jerusalem) to Ignaz Seipel (Vienna), in Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 211–214, here 213.

<sup>33</sup>For the growing influence of Czechoslovakia, see also Rill, "Österreich und das Heilige Land," 342–344; Archiv der Österreichischen Bischofskonferenz, Vienna, Bischofskonferenzen 1920–1930.

the hospice, Haas wrote to Chancellor Seipel in 1927 “that it would be profoundly regrettable if we had to lose this final remainder of political weight as a Catholic power in the Holy Land to the Czechs”. While the Czechs were vainly attempting to become popular, Austria “was still being judged according to the values of the past”.<sup>34</sup> According to the consul, the local discussions showed “how stubbornly people here still regard the new Austria as the champion of the traditions of the old empire, but also how much it enjoys in general sympathy precedence over other pretenders”.<sup>35</sup>

Following the British conquest of Palestine, the fate of the Austrian hospice in Jerusalem was chequered, but mitigated by the preferential treatment given to Fellingner.<sup>36</sup> But in February 1918, the hospice was confiscated by the British administration and converted into an orphanage for up to 200 local children from the “Syria and Palestine Relief Fund”, which was subordinate to the Anglican bishop of Jerusalem. A personal visit to the military governor Ronald Storrs, during which Fellingner stressed the religious nature of the hostel, contributed to the return of the house on 29 August 1919. The interior of the building had largely been devastated by the Palestinian children, “to whom Western lifestyle and hygiene were largely alien”, as the rector wrote to Vienna, and the house was also bug-ridden. In public opinion, the transformation of a well-known Catholic institution into a Protestant orphanage had not created a good impression.

To gain revenue for the house, rector Fellingner used the building as a guest house for British civil servants and officers. When pilgrimages resumed in the course of the 1920s with more but smaller groups than in the final years of the monarchy, he successively reduced the number of permanent boarders. To maintain operations, numerous service staff was hired again in addition to the four German Borromeo sisters. With the help of the patriarch, Fellingner managed to maintain the hospice as an Austrian institution, even against the claims made by different successor states to Austria-Hungary. The fact that the vice-rector was to continue to come from a diocese in one of the successor states in a two-year rotation system gave young theologians the opportunity to deepen their Bible studies in the Holy Land. At the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, the hostel had more than 40 beds for visitors and ten for permanent boarders. In 1929, in the year when Fellingner was consecrated suffragan bishop to the surprise of the public, the rector’s plans concerning building reconstruction entered a concrete stage, but it was only in January 1931 that the mandate authorities gave permission to build a second

<sup>34</sup>No. 14, 28 December 1927: Walter Haas (Jerusalem) to Ignaz Seipel (Vienna), in Steiningner, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 180–183, here 183.

<sup>35</sup>No. 27, 31 October 1928: Walter Haas (Jerusalem) to Ignaz Seipel (Vienna), *ibid.*, 202–203, here 203.

<sup>36</sup>On the following, see Helmut Wohnout, *Das österreichische Hospiz in Jerusalem. Geschichte des Pilgerhauses an der Via Dolorosa* (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), 123–134 (citation 125).

storey. Because of the precarious economic situation in Austria Fellingner had to travel home to raise the necessary funds, so that construction could commence in 1932.

By contrast, the years following the First World War had not been at all positive for the institution in Tantur. Like the hospice used for members of the armies of the Central Powers during the Great War, the Knights of Malta had to watch Tantur's slow decline—the Austrian Hospitallers of St John of God, beloved by the population, departed in 1920, replaced by Italians.<sup>37</sup> In 1931, the historiography of the order described the subsidiary in Tantur, a small hospital with a focus on an outpatient clinic and pharmacy, as abandoned. Tantur had “to be closed for different reasons, primarily economic ones”.<sup>38</sup> About the hospital in Nazareth, however, there is a report of a fine, one-storey building with 30 beds that for some years had been granting board to pilgrims from all countries, preferentially Austria. The statistics for 1930 show the admission of 38 sick persons (560 boarding days) and 583 people seeking rest and relaxation (1,562 boarding days); of the sick, 29 could be cured and the condition of eight more improved.<sup>39</sup>

This institution had also been requisitioned during the war and even plundered. Orphaned until 1920, it was then taken over by the Austrian brethren from Tantur. Brother Norbert Hirczy, who served a total of 47 years in the Holy Land, has gone down in the annals of post-war history as the head of the hospital. The Arabs in Nazareth knew him by the name of Abuna Saliba.<sup>40</sup> When the hospital in Nazareth had to restrict its activities to the function of a hospice in the 1920s, this was originally due to the British mandate government. Nevertheless, the brethren remained active in the field of medicine within a modest framework, with a house in town used as a dispensary and outpatient clinic, where the history of the Brethren of St. John of God in Nazareth had once commenced.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup>See Thomas F. Stransky, “Das österreichische Hospital am Tantur,” in *Mit Szepter und Pilgerstab. Österreichische Präsenz im Heiligen Land seit den Tagen Kaiser Franz Josephs*, ed. Bernhard A. Böhler (Vienna: Katalogbuch, 2000), 277; also Thomas F. Stransky, “The Austrian Hospital at Tantur (1869–1918),” in *Austrian Presence in the Holy Land in the 19th and early 20th Century: Proceedings of the Symposium in the Austrian Hospice in Jerusalem on March 1–2, 1995*, ed. Marian Wrba (Tel Aviv: Austrian Embassy Tel Aviv, 1996), 114; No. 163, 24 March 1937: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Guido Schmidt (Vienna), in Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 449–451.

<sup>38</sup>See *Die Barmherzigen Brüder* 167–168 (citation 167), 189.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 189–194.

<sup>40</sup>‘Abuna’ means ‘our father’ and is a term by Arab Christians for a church dignitary; the name ‘Saliba’ derives from the Arabic word for ‘cross’. I thank Kamel Bader for this information.

<sup>41</sup>See Norbert Schwacke, “Das österreichische Hospital in Nazareth,” in *Mit Szepter und Pilgerstab. Österreichische Präsenz im Heiligen Land seit den Tagen Kaiser Franz Josephs*, ed. Bernhard A. Böhler (Vienna: Katalogbuch, 2000), 287; also Norbert Schwacke [!] “The Austrian Hospital in Nazareth,” in *Austrian Presence in the Holy Land in the 19th and early 20th Century: Proceedings of the Symposium in the Austrian Hospice in Jerusalem on March 1–2, 1995*, ed. Marian Wrba (Tel Aviv: Austrian Embassy Tel Aviv, 1996), 89–90.

In Vienna, the General Commissioner's Office for the Holy Land survived the turmoil of the post-war years not least to the commitment of Father Melchior Lechner, who held the office of the general commissioner from 1902 to 1927. The Tyrolean witnessed the years of the great people's pilgrimages as well as the demise of the Habsburg Monarchy. This coincided with the most crucial reduction of his scope of activities. What had to be endured were periods of paper shortages and major losses of money and securities in times of inflation. The Southern Tyrolean Father Mauritius Bossi-Fedrigotti held the office from 1927 to 1931. This general commissioner advocated assigning more importance to the Good Friday collections in favour of the Guardians of the Holy Sepulchre and breathing new life into the "Army of the Holy Cross" which had been founded at the beginning of the 1890s.<sup>42</sup>

Then, with Father Pirmin Hasenöhr, previously an Apostolic missionary in Brazil, a member of the Franciscan province in Tyrol again became the General Commissioner for the Holy Land in Vienna.<sup>43</sup> As *the* personification of personnel continuities, he worked for the Orient mission with great commitment in both the First and Second Republics. Standing in the tradition of his predecessors, this man with mission practice published the first edition of *Österreichische Pilgerbriefe* in 1932. He entertained great sympathy for the Habsburg family as significant benefactors of the Holy Land. In 1932/1933, within one and a half years he held 65 slide lectures and about 20 sermons on the Holy Land.<sup>44</sup> As a result of the strict currency regulations, by 1932 it had become difficult to send money to the Holy Land, and for this reason precedence was given to dispatching goods, including shoes for fathers, brethren, and orphans to St Salvator in Jerusalem, but also oak wood for oil and wine barrels. The two following years, 1933 and 1934, were to be more than eventful.

### AUTHORITARIAN AUSTRIA AND PALESTINE

In the spring of 1933, the so-called self-elimination by the Austrian parliament was exploited by Engelbert Dollfuß' government for a veritable coup d'état and a departure from the political system of democracy. Austria's bishops were convinced of the legitimacy of the action and were initially full of exuberant praise and enthusiasm for the new authoritarian government.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup>See P. Rigobert Wasner O. F. M., "Geschichte des General-Kommissariates von Wien," 300 *Jahre Generalkommissariat des Heiligen Landes in Wien. Jubiläumsnummer der Österreichischen Pilgerbriefe* (April–June 1933), 4–24, here 21–24. The Good Friday collections had been reintroduced in the dioceses of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1842.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 24; Hasenöhr, O. F. M., "Ein Blick in das General-Kommissariat," 60.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 69–70.

<sup>45</sup>See Michaela Sohn-Kronthaler, "Von der Stütze der Monarchie zur Mitgestalterin des demokratischen Staatswesens – Katholische Kirche und Republik in Österreich (1918–2008)," in *Österreich. 90 Jahre Republik. Beitragsband der Ausstellung im Parlament*, eds. Stefan Karner and Lorenz Mikoletzky (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2008), 351.

Even the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem was interested in the responsibilities and successes of the new Austrian government.<sup>46</sup>

In the light of its ideological background it is hardly surprising that authoritarian Austria sought to place some emphasis on its relations with Palestine. This found expression, for example, in the use of the cross potent, widely known as the Jerusalem Cross. Already employed under Seipel in the 1920s on the reverse of coins and as Order of Merit for services rendered to the Republic of Austria, in the 1930s the cross potent became the official symbol of the Fatherland Front, the united party of the so-called corporative state. The politician shaping the Austrian “chancellor’s dictatorship” (Helmut Wahnout) saw in it “a symbol of Christianisation”.<sup>47</sup>

In the autumn of 1933, the 300th anniversary of the Viennese General Commissioner’s Office for the Holy Land was celebrated at the General German Catholic Congress, which took place in Vienna from 7th to 12th November and stood under the sign of the crusade. The jubilee ceremony of the Viennese General Commissioner’s Office has been overlooked in secondary literature, because so many events took place simultaneously: the 250th anniversary of the expulsion of the Turks, the 500th anniversary of the completion of St. Stephen’s Cathedral, the 80th Catholic Congress and the Holy Year proclaimed by Pius XI.<sup>48</sup> The celebration was held in the midst of the world economic crisis, but after the second loan by the League of Nations to Austria. It was to commemorate Austrian good deeds in favour of the Holy Land, pay tribute to the work of the Franciscan Guardians of the Holy Sepulchre, awaken interest in the Holy Places in Palestine, and not least arouse the thought of pilgrimage and bring the pilgrims to Jerusalem together.<sup>49</sup> General Commissioner Hasenöhrle arranged church and extra-church events for all the friends and patrons of the Holy Land. The play *Gott will es* by Maria Pokorny, set at the time of the Third Crusade, was performed three times. Moreover, near the Franciscan Monastery, but only in one room, the Holy Land Museum was opened, which was to be a future branch of the General Commissioner’s Office. There, a large camel carved of olive wood gave testimony “to the high standard of Arab popular art”.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup>See No. 68, 2 January 1934: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Engelbert Dollfuß (Vienna), in Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 289–290.

<sup>47</sup>The words of Federal Chancellor Dollfuß in the meetings concerning the new constitution, in which the issue of the national coat of arms was also discussed: No. 930 (20/21/24/26/27/28/29 March 1934), in *Protokolle des Ministerrates der Ersten Republik, Abteilung VIII, 20. Mai 1932 bis 25. Juli 1934, vol. 6: Kabinett Dr. Engelbert Dollfuß, 23. Februar 1934 bis 18. April 1934*, ed. Gertrude Enderle-Burcel (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Staatsdruckerei, 1985), 140–292, here 142.

<sup>48</sup>See Pia Janke, *Politische Massenfeste in Österreich zwischen 1918 und 1938* (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2010), 289.

<sup>49</sup>See *Österreichische Pilgerbriefe* 2 (July–September 1933), 1.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 2–3; *ibid.* (October–December 1933), 1–7 (citation 6).

A list of the patrons and of the local groups of the “Army of the Holy Cross” in the parishes shows that this organisation continued to exist despite economic hardships. Accordingly, in the jubilee year 1933 there were 333 patrons. The number of members came to about 15,000.<sup>51</sup> After his assassination in the course of the National Socialist Putsch of 1934, Chancellor Dollfuß was accepted as a permanent member, which implied that the Franciscans at the Holy Places read a mass for him every day.<sup>52</sup> In general, old traditions were taken up once more. After 1935, masses “Pro Natione Austriaca” were celebrated every third Thursday in the five main churches of the Custody; an annual High Mass “Pro Praesidente Austriae” (1935) or “In Festo Rei Publicae Austriae” (after 1 May 1936) was held in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—even during the years when Austria did not exist.<sup>53</sup> The Austrian Consul General Jorda commented on the revival of this tradition by pointing out “a certain political significance, as it again completes a step in the re-acquisition of the historical Austrian status in the Near East for the Republic of Austria, when the effects of such church acts in the Near East and on the other foreign representations here are taken into account”.<sup>54</sup>

After Walter Haas’ sudden death in 1933, a change took place at the head of the Austrian consulate in Jerusalem. The interim direction was assumed by Anton Jedek, who remained as agency secretary after Ivo Jorda’s appointment as consul. Shortly afterwards, Jedek became the provincial head of the Fatherland Front, and in 1938 he was taken over by the German Consulate General. Jorda himself held office until 1938, when Austria disappeared from the map with the so-called Anschluss to Germany.<sup>55</sup> The new consul insisted that his office, which looked after about 4,000 citizens (the majority of them Jewish), be elevated to a consulate general. This rise in status, a unique event in the history of the Austrian consulate in Jerusalem, was authorised by the council of ministers on 9 October 1934 in view of the fact that a number of other nations, apart from the Great Powers, were maintaining consulates general in Jerusalem. Another argument was the size of the administrative region. The Austrian honorary consulates in the French mandate of Syria (Aleppo, Beirut, and Damascus) were subordinate to the consulate in Jerusalem.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup>See Hasenöhr, O. F. M., “Ein Blick in das General-Kommissariat,” 66–69.

<sup>52</sup>See *Österreichische Pilgerbriefe* 3 (October–December 1934), 15.

<sup>53</sup>See Breycha-Vauthier, *Österreich in der Levante*, 56.

<sup>54</sup>No. 153, 2 May 1936: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Egon Berger-Waldeneegg (Vienna), in Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 435–436. Regarding the initial objection of the Latin Patriarch, see No. 158, 29 October 1936: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to BKA,AA, *ibid.*, 442–443.

<sup>55</sup>For the years 1933 to 1938, see Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 30–38. For the biography of Jorda, who was considered a friend of Dollfuß, see Agstner, *Österreichs Spitzendiplomaten*, 266–267.

<sup>56</sup>See No. 970 (9 October 1934), in *Protokolle des Ministerrates der Ersten Republik, Abteilung IX, 29. Juli 1934 bis 11. März 1938, vol. 1: Kabinett Dr. Kurt Schuschnigg, 30. Juli 1934 bis 26. Oktober 1934*, ed. Gertrude Enderle-Burcel (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Staatsdruckerei, 1988), 400–433, here 401.

Jorda's reports mirror domestic events in Austria, for example, in the form of Arab-Jewish reactions to the events of February 1934, as well as conditions in Palestine. The increase in clashes between Arabs and Jews also had implications for the employees of the consulate. This can be seen, for instance, in the request expressed by the Arab kavass to be allowed to wear the badge of the Fatherland Front so as to be safer with his headdress, a tarboosh, on errands to the Jewish quarter.<sup>57</sup> In 1943, a book would be published by Jorda about the events, *Arab Uprising. Experience and Documents*, which he understood to be a factual report.<sup>58</sup>

The reports from Jerusalem also relate the significance accorded to Austrian exports to Palestine. Furthermore, the Austrian image campaign aimed at tourism also intended to strengthen the Austrian economy. When Jorda did promotion in Jerusalem, he was astonished that he "often encountered amazing knowledge about Tyrol on the part of British officials as well as the strong inclination to connect the future holiday to a lengthy sojourn in Austria, whereas the Jewish celebrities, usually from the East, can only be set on this track with difficulty".<sup>59</sup> Not only the wonderful countryside and hospitable inhabitants of the Alpine Republic were emphasised, but the image of Austria as a musical world power was deliberately transported. When Jorda reported about the outbreak of the Austrian civil war in February 1934, he initially did not see himself in a position to assess to what extent these events "will affect our imports in Palestine". But he found it symptomatic "that I was able to organize a concert by a Viennese Jewish quartet here in Jerusalem on 17th of this month without any bother, whilst the concert projected for the quartet in Tel Aviv on 18th was cancelled".<sup>60</sup> The Salzburg Festival, founded in 1920, also radiated as far as Palestine. In 1937, with a concert in Haifa on 5<sup>th</sup> January, Arturo Toscanini ended his tour to Palestine, which "indirectly also represented effective propaganda for the Salzburg Festival".<sup>61</sup>

That there was no cultural one-way street from Austria to Palestine can be gleaned from Jorda's reports about news in the Arab press. In December 1933, for instance, the paper *Falastin* covered the intentions of

<sup>57</sup> See Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 35–36.

<sup>58</sup> Ivo Jorda, *Araber-Aufstand. Erlebnisse und Dokumente aus Palästina* (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1943), here XIV.

<sup>59</sup> No. 69, 5 January 1934: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Engelbert Dollfuß (Vienna), in Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 290–292, here 292. See also No. 95, 3 July 1934: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Engelbert Dollfuß (Vienna), No. 97, 7 July 1934: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Engelbert Dollfuß (Vienna), *ibid.*, 344–345, 349–350.

<sup>60</sup> No. 74, 19 February 1934: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Engelbert Dollfuß (Vienna), *ibid.*, 304–305, here 305. See also No. 76, 2 March 1934: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Engelbert Dollfuß (Vienna), No. 78, 10 March 1934: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Engelbert Dollfuß (Vienna), No. 82, 24 March 1934: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Engelbert Dollfuß (Vienna), *ibid.*, 307–308, 310–311, 318–319.

<sup>61</sup> No. 161, 8 January 1937: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to BKA,AA, *ibid.*, 446–447, here 446. For the Salzburg Festival, see Janke, *Politische Massenfeste*, 187–208.

the *Heimwehren* “to transform Austria into a Christian empire in pursuit of Austrian traditions and not to confine themselves to today’s borders, i.e. to abolish the peace treaties. The inclination is to re-establish the Holy Roman Empire on a modern basis, so it covers Germany and today’s Austria as well as the regions that used to belong to it”. The report in the Arab paper closed with the question as to how this movement was related to the issue of reunification (*Anschluss*).<sup>62</sup> Arab sympathies for National Socialist Germany can probably not be separated from the viewpoint common in the Arab press “that Austria will ultimately be merged into National Socialist Germany”, which also made an impression on Jewish circles there.<sup>63</sup>

Like Haas, Jorda also championed support for the Austrian hospice and the Brethren of St John of God in Nazareth, at which Czech aspirations were still directed. After the branch in Nazareth was granted a subsidy amounting to 200 pounds by the Austrian government in 1929, on the personal request of Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg a one-time payment of 1,500 Shillings was authorised in 1935. Then, a new request for money by the prior a year later was felt as an affront by the chancellor’s office. A few months later, the hospice in Nazareth was transferred from the Graz to the Vienna province.<sup>64</sup> When Jorda presented the request for a subsidy by the Brethren of St John of God in 1935, he argued the loyalty and the patriotism of the brethren, who had never lost close contact to their homeland. So, it would be “very welcome, if it were possible somewhat to ease their struggle for existence and thus consolidate an Austrian position in the Holy Land, such as other nations like Italy, France, Poland etc. are accustomed to doing for their institutions here with very rich subsidies”.<sup>65</sup>

Two events made the political dilemma of the Austrian brethren in Nazareth evident. When the German war cemetery was consecrated on the premises of the hospital in 1934, ardent speeches were held in the manner of National Socialist Germany. But the brethren cherished great sympathies for Chancellor Dollfuß, who had been assassinated that year and who, in their view, was to be regarded as a heroic Catholic antagonist of National Socialism. In his honour, they held a large-scale commemoration service on their premises, in the course of which Consul General Jorda planted an

<sup>62</sup>No. 66, 21 December 1933: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to BKA,AA, in Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 286.

<sup>63</sup>From Jorda’s report on the occasion of Dollfuß’ death: No. 100, 27 July 1934: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to BKA,AA, *ibid.*, 352–354, here 353. To Dollfuß Jorda had stated: “A strongly pro-German hue can constantly be observed in Arab circles, at least in their press [...]” No. 78, 10 March 1934: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Engelbert Dollfuß (Vienna), *ibid.*, 310–311, here 311.

<sup>64</sup>Summarised in Rill, “Österreich und das Heilige Land,” 345–346.

<sup>65</sup>No. 119, 9 January 1935: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Egon Berger-Waldenegg (Vienna), in Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 383.



oak tree in memory of Dollfuß, representing the beginning of a “Dollfuß Wood”. However, in 1937 a German citizen was appointed prior of the Austrian house, to be joined by a further Silesian. The latter was the physician Leonhard Konitzer, who had previously worked in the Graz order’s hospital and was known to the Arab population of Nazareth for 20 years as “the Austrian doctor”. After the Anschluss in 1938, the British military authorities took over the Austrian hospice in Nazareth initially by renting it, then, after the outbreak of war, by confiscating it.<sup>66</sup>

But Tantur, too, became a topic again in 1934. When Jorda visited the hospice in Nazareth, which was suffering from the loss of tourism and decline in pilgrimages, for the first time, Father Norbert Hirczy, “whose monastery is of refreshing Austrian disposition”, also confronted him with the issue of Tantur.<sup>67</sup> The prior from the Burgenland described the events surrounding the surrender of the hospital there, behind which, in his view, there had been an Italian intrigue. Nevertheless, at that juncture Hirczy deemed it possible for the Styrian province to re-acquire the house, if the earlier subsidies were again granted by the Knights of Malta. Ivo Jorda defended this request to Dollfuß, stressing that the excellent relations with the Holy See would decisively support such an action. A return to Tantur would not just gratify the Austrian Brethren of St John of God, but also impact on Austria’s prestige in Palestine. Jorda’s presentation did not lack a reference to the associated economic relations. With 200 to 300 patients a day in the outpatients’ clinic and 30 to 60 beds, the Brothers Hospitallers “had led the hospital to a remarkable peak” between 1894 and 1920. By virtue of the great popularity of the Austrian brethren, the populace of Bethlehem had been prepared violently to prevent their enforced withdrawal, which only the prior of the time had been able to stop. The residents still yearned for them to return, for the fact that Italian sisters were now running a kind of recreation home was in keeping “neither with the purpose of the house, nor with the earlier cultural and religious significance of the institution”.<sup>68</sup>

In 1934, the year in which the Viennese General Commissioner’s Office officially headed a pilgrimage for the first time since the Great War,<sup>69</sup> the

<sup>66</sup>See Schwake, “Das österreichische Hospital in Nazareth,” 288; also Schwacke [!], “The Austrian Hospital in Nazareth,” 90–91. For the memorial service for Dollfuß, see in particular No. 149, 3 March 1936: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Egon Berger-Waldenegg (Vienna), No. 150, 15 March 1936: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Wilhelm Miklas (Vienna), No. 151, 17 March 1936: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Egon Berger-Waldenegg (Vienna), in Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 428–429, 429–430, 431–434.

<sup>67</sup>No. 71, 17 January 1934: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Engelbert Dollfuß (Vienna), *ibid.*, 293–298 (citation 293), 94.

<sup>68</sup>No. 73, 18 January 1934: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Engelbert Dollfuß (Vienna), *ibid.*, 302–303.

<sup>69</sup>See *Österreichische Pilgerbriefe* 3 (July–September 1934), 10.

Austrian hospice in Jerusalem was well occupied with more than 350 guests. But the conflicts between Jewish immigrants and the Arab population immediately put a stop to visitors to the Holy Land. Overall, the 1930s involved a number of changes for the hospice. Following Cardinal Piffl's death in April 1932, the curator of the hospice, Theodor Innitzer, became the new archbishop of Vienna. In 1933, the three Borromeans working in the hospice were replaced by five Vöcklabruck school sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis and a kitchen help. This underlined the character of the hostel as an Austrian institution. In 1933, too, new hospice statutes were passed in view of the privileges for the successor states to the monarchy laid down by Cardinal Piffl in 1924. Finally, in 1935 Franz Haider, an Orientalist by training who had already spent several years in Beirut, was appointed the new rector.<sup>70</sup> Haider reports intercultural contacts during a long stay by the former Persian Prime Minister Tabatabai in his house. On the last day before Ramadan, Tabatabai cooked for his guests, among whom was Mufti Husseini, according to Haider the respected leader of the Palestinian Muslims. "[...] as chance had it, the mufti came to sit under the cross [...] in the dining room".<sup>71</sup>

In August of 1935, the largest pilgrimage from Austria to the Holy Land during the interwar years took place with 165 pilgrims. The occasion was the consecration of the Austrian donation of an altar to the Dormitio Church, which was celebrating its 25th jubilee.<sup>72</sup> The Austrian committee for this first Austrian donation in Jerusalem in a long time—following the example of the Hungarian Catholics—compiled a "Who's Who" of Austrian Catholicism and was under the patronage of President Wilhelm Miklas.<sup>73</sup> Interesting here is the location. The German Benedictine Abbey on Mount Sion is part of the congregation of Beuron. It united German-speaking Benedictine monasteries since the 1860s. Therefore, it had a meaning beyond politics.

The following years (1936–1939) were marked by the "Arab Uprising", to which the servant Karl Breitingner, a member of the Austrian hospice, also fell victim. To be safe in the Old City, Breitingner, who had been born in Vienna, wore Arab headdress. He was shot dead while wearing it on his way to the Jewish New City in May 1936. Seen by the Arabs as a martyr for their cause,

<sup>70</sup>See Wohnout, *Das österreichische Hospiz*, 135–138.

<sup>71</sup>See Franz Haider to Theodor Innitzer, Jerusalem, 22 February 1936, in: Archiv der Österreichischen Bischofskonferenz, Vienna, Bischofskonferenzen 1935–1937.

<sup>72</sup>See Wohnout, *Das österreichische Hospiz*, 138; an illustration of the altar, which reflects the aesthetics of the time in Rill, "Österreich und das Heilige Land," 341. See also *Österreichische Pilgerbriefe* 4 (January–March 1935), 13–15; *ibid.* (April–September 1935), 14–15; *ibid.* (October–December 1935), 7.

<sup>73</sup>See Archiv der Österreichischen Bischofskonferenz, Vienna, Bischofskonferenz 1934–1955 and Bischofskonferenzen 1935–1937.

the hospice employee's funeral at the Catholic cemetery on Mount Sion turned into a political demonstration. Despite the adverse effects, the mood in the hospice was in favour of the Arabs, as Rector Haider and the nuns held the policies of the British Mandate power responsible for the bloodshed. However, the fact that Arab violence was increasingly turning against British targets was also economically worrying for the hospice.<sup>74</sup> Generally speaking, Austria positioned itself as a neutral power in the Arab-Jewish conflict, which even involved an offer by an Arab official to redevelop Transjordan economically.<sup>75</sup>

If we examine Austria's Catholic press,<sup>76</sup> the example of Palestine shows how the public viewed issues of the outside world. Usually, more press attention was given to Jewish immigration and the development of Zionism (closely associated with Vienna) than to the resident Arab population. Although anti-Semitism—the traditional Christian anti-Judaism had long taken on racist and biological components—and a certain pro-Arab stance occasionally mingled, contemporary judgements strikingly often remained undecided. This can be seen in the *Österreichische Pilgerbriefe*: "It is understandable that the Arabs are rising up against the powerful Jewish invasion. It is a question of the ownership of the land and rule in Palestine; but, basically, Zionism is less dangerous to us Christians than the pan-Islamic movement!"<sup>77</sup> In the background, there was always the worry that the rights of Catholics to the Holy Places might be marginalised. Although relief had prevailed that Ottoman rule over the Holy Land had finally been shaken off in 1917, now clear criticism was expressed of the British Mandate government. Who would have thought that in retrospect the Catholics felt better off under Ottoman administration than that of a Christian and European power?

## CONCLUSION

Both Austria and Palestine experienced dramatic upheavals as a result of the First World War. The demise of the Habsburg Monarchy and the proclamation of the Republic of (German) Austria could be foreseen just as little as

<sup>74</sup>Nonetheless, the economic situation of the hospice was also good in 1937, with 498 guests. See Wohnout, *Das österreichische Hospiz*, 139–140. See also Franz Haider to Theodor Innitzer, Jerusalem, 4 June 1937, in: Archiv der Österreichischen Bischofskonferenz, Vienna, Bischofskonferenzen 1935–1937. Here Haider's assessment of the political situation includes the statement: "The Arabs are adamant regarding their demands and refuse any kind of division of the country."

<sup>75</sup>See No. 90, 18 June 1934: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to BKA,AA, No. 96, 3 July 1934: Ivo Jorda (Jerusalem) to Engelbert Dollfuß (Vienna), in Steininger, *Berichte aus Jerusalem*, 333, 345–348.

<sup>76</sup>The search was carried out with ANNO (AustriaN Newspapers Online), the online portal of the Austrian National Library for newspapers and journals.

<sup>77</sup>*Österreichische Pilgerbriefe* 4 (October–December 1935), 15.

a future of Palestine outside the Ottoman Empire and under a mandate of the League of Nations. The Mandate entered the stage of world history as a special form of colonialism, in the constellations of which minor states like Austria held marginal positions. Nevertheless, the inclusion of minor states in the multi-faceted history of the Mandate period in Palestine expands historiographical perspectives in a profitable way, especially under the aspect of European cultural diplomacy and the system of missions. For the Mandate period, it must be borne in mind that “the sheer diversity of missions, in terms of national background and multifarious arrangements with colonial governments” make it very difficult “to offer neat generalisations”.<sup>78</sup>

In terms of the Orient mission, the interests of the Austrian First Republic followed the course that had been set in the monarchy. In this field, Austria saw itself very clearly as the legitimate successor to the Habsburg Monarchy, whose Catholic ruling dynasty had founded traditions going far back into the past through its commitment to the Holy Land. In the late nineteenth century, the Austrian contribution to the Catholic Orient mission had been comparably small. However, against the background of specific mentalities and political events, a “Jerusalem milieu” developed in the monarchy featuring a variety of actors. Once the support of the dynasty and Austrian participation in the hospital of the Knights of Malta in Tantur, as well as in Georg Gatt’s mission station in Gaza, had disappeared, there remained the search for a position among the Catholic nations. With the Austrian hospice in Jerusalem and the settlement of the Brethren of St John of God in Nazareth, two institutions of the Austrian sphere of influence continued to exist. The old institution of the Viennese General Commissioner’s Office for the Holy Land also survived the time of upheaval. In view of this “estate management” in economically straitened times, Dominique Trimbur’s view that several rivals withdrew from the field in the course of the First World War must be supplemented. “Austria-Hungary’s Catholic ambitions ended with the collapse of the Dual Monarchy”,<sup>79</sup> but during the interwar years, Austria and other successor states were still parties interested in accepting the legacy of the Habsburg Monarchy.

<sup>78</sup>Michael Gladwin, “Mission and Colonialism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Christian Thought*, eds. Joel D. S. Rasmussen, Judith Wolfe, and Johannes Zachhuber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 295.

<sup>79</sup>Dominique Trimbur, “Introduction II: History in Fast Motion: An Overview,” in *Europa und Palästina 1799–1948: Religion – Politik – Gesellschaft / Europe and Palestine 1799–1948: Religion—Politics—Society*, eds. Barbara Haider-Wilson and Dominique Trimbur (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), 51.

Palestine has always been entangled with the world beyond. From the nineteenth century on, this involvement has been intensified through processes of internationalisation and globalisation. Hence, the Middle Eastern Mandates “have a prominent part to play in broader debates in colonial, imperial, international, transnational, and global history”.<sup>80</sup> As could be read in Austrian newspapers, Palestine was seen as “a matter interesting not Jews and Arabs alone, Palestine is the joint cultural property of the entire civilized world”.<sup>81</sup> This statement refers not least to its religions and missions. It remained a characteristic of the Orient mission that it had only marginal prospects of success regarding the conversion of Jews and Muslims and that over the decades its focus had been on building up a social infrastructure in the region,<sup>82</sup> a presence that found its first expression in the form of buildings. In 1934, the “conversion of Jews and Mohammedans” was only in the penultimate position of seven prayer suggestions recommended to the members of the “Army of the Holy Cross”.<sup>83</sup>

Following the erosion of the European concert of powers in the Armageddon of the First World War, the Austrian Orient mission in Palestine experienced a reduction in its resources, but the representation of Austrian interests on the state consular and on the non-state and church levels was not completely terminated. The more restricted options of joint proceedings on the part of the church and the state in the Holy Land basically had something to do with the abolition of the capitulation treaties (1914/1923) and hence of the religious protectorate. For this reason, the conflicts occurring in the Holy Places were still worthy of being reported, but did not involve political and diplomatic steps, as in the times of the Habsburg Monarchy.

After the end of the First World War and up to the final years of the abortive attempt to assert statehood towards Germany, large sections of the Austrian population did not have a sustainable awareness of Austria and supported the idea of Anschluss. Nevertheless, at that time the first foundations

<sup>80</sup>Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan, “Preface,” in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates*, eds. Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), XVII–XVIII, here XVII.

<sup>81</sup>“Der Judenstaat in Palästina,” *Salzburger Chronik*, 3 April 1925, 1.

<sup>82</sup>For this aspect, see Norbert Friedrich, Uwe Kaminsky, and Roland Löffler, eds., *The Social Dimension of Christian Missions in the Middle East: Historical Studies of the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010).

<sup>83</sup>See *Österreichische Pilgerbriefe* 3 (October–December 1934), 15. However, the following year the “conversion of Jews and Mohammedans to Jesus Christ” appeared as the second of five “prayer suggestions”; the “return of the Orientals to Catholic unity” remained at the top. *Ibid.*, 4 (April–September 1935), 25.

were laid for later pillars of Austrian cultural identity, as the history of relations with Palestine shows. The clear emphasis placed on economic policies in comparison with the period of the monarchy concentrated on the field of tourism, which the official Austria endeavoured to increase among British, Jewish and Arab elites. If Austrian cultural diplomacy in Palestine managed to trace an arc from the “Orient Mission” of 1917 to the propagation of Austria as a holiday destination or the land of classical music in the 1930s, two other components remained constant: first the accent placed on cultivating Austria’s Catholic image among the international community and on gaining sympathy among the local population and, secondly, the cultural influence that was exerted by the missionaries working in the Holy Land.

The activities of the Viennese General Commissioner’s Office for the Holy Land illustrate the significance attached to the home mission and hence public relations in the homeland. At that time, the main emphasis of the Orient mission was perceived to be on the “mission subject”.<sup>84</sup> The so-called mission objects hardly appear in the Austrian sources, a circumstance that was probably encouraged by the existence of European parallel societies in the Holy Land. Attention was focused rather on the mission supporters back home, who were to be mobilised to finance missionary endeavours. In times of political and social upheaval especially, personnel continuities were most significant in the case of non-state protagonists. Although the sojourn of pilgrim groups in the Holy Land was too short to establish intercultural contacts, the Austrian missionaries and local employees of the Austrian institutions provided completely different possibilities of exchange.

During the Habsburg Monarchy, foreign policy, which was shaped by 17 foreign ministers for seventy years after 1848, remained an imperial prerogative. In only twenty years of the First Republic and authoritarian Austria, an almost identical number of persons (18) shaped foreign policy.<sup>85</sup> Even with due respect paid to the role of civil servants, this circumstance could not remain without consequences on the issue of continuities. The Great Power status of the Habsburg Monarchy was permanently damaged after 1866, but this only increased the importance of prestige on the international stage. In the consular reports from Palestine between 1927 and 1938, the word “prestige” still appears repeatedly.

<sup>84</sup>See [Adolf] Rucker, “Aus der Orientmission,” *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 14 (1924), 165–176, here 165.

<sup>85</sup>See Rauscher, “Struktur und Organisation,” 25.



Fig. 1 I. & R. officers taking a cultural stroll through Jerusalem (Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Kriegsarchiv)

What remained important for the Jerusalem protagonists of the Austrian First Republic and those in the years of authoritarian Austria, who found different forms to express the *Dollfuß* cult, was to cultivate the image of Catholic Austria with insistence on the grandeur of its past in the locations of the Christian history of salvation. Austrian influence in Palestine primarily aimed at attracting local inhabitants to Austria in order to demonstrate its presence in the Holy Land to the international community. In this light, the Arab population was certainly not the primary target audience of the Austrian state, and further research should be encouraged on the different representatives of the Austrian church working as missionaries in Mandate Palestine. Austrian state and church commitment in the Holy Land was ultimately still influenced by the manifestations of Austrian Catholicism. The break with this connection was to be reserved for later decades, when the processes of secularisation observable in society reached completely new dimensions (Figs. 1, 2, 3, and 4).

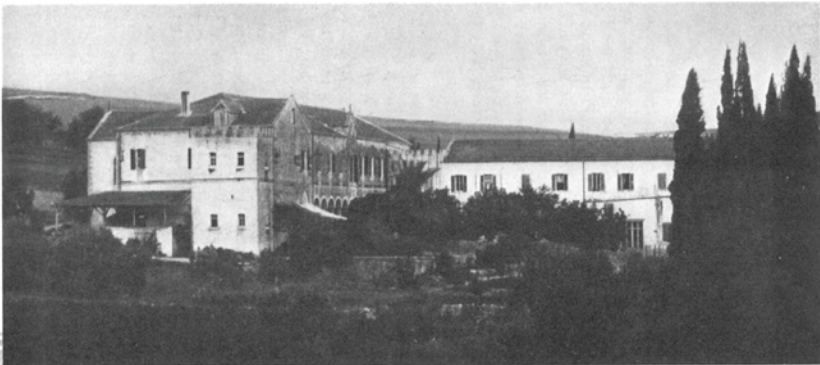


Fig. 2 The Austrian hospice in the Arab quarter of Jerusalem (Österreichisches Hospiz Jerusalem)





**Fig. 3** A group of Austrian pilgrims in front of the Austrian hospice in Jerusalem. The bishop sitting second from the right is Franz Fellingner (Österreichisches Hospiz Jerusalem)



Krankenhaus und Hospiz in Nazareth (Palästina)

**Fig. 4** The hospital and hospice of the Order of St. John of God in Nazareth (Die Barmherzigen Brüder, edited by Friedrich Läufer)

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